NUMBER TWENTY-ONE • MARCH, 1995
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HERO™ ILLUSTRATED

SPAWN UNLEASHED!
COMICS, TOYS, TODD, AND LETHARGIC LAD!?!

HARLAN ELLISON!
AND A FEW OF HIS FAVORITE THINGS...

JOHN OSTRANDER!
AND THE WACKY WORLD OF *THE SPECTRE!*

EVAN DORKIN!
ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE!

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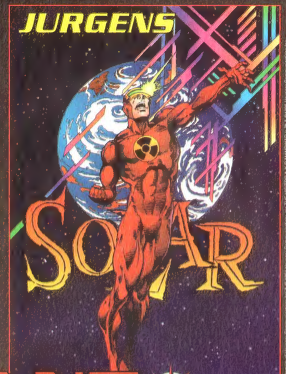
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SHAKING UP YOUR LOCAL COMIC STORE!

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RANTINGS

THE FUTURE IS WHERE YOU AND I ARE GOING TO SPEND THE REST OF OUR LIVES...



I'll never forget that day. My mother came into my room to tell me something.

"Your father and I have discussed it and think that it might be a good idea if you moved out by your next birthday. It's not that we don't love you, it's just that we think this will help you grow up."

I was shattered! Sure, I had been a regular pain in the ass, but not any more than I had been all my life. Did they really hate me so much that they would send me off into the cold, hard world? I decided I would show them. Like someone trying to irritate an old girlfriend by getting another one quick, I vowed to find my own place fast.

Within a week, a buddy of mine and I found an apartment. It took a little adjusting, but ended up being great. I didn't have to worry about my parents telling me what to do. I could stay awake all night having a party if I wanted. Eventually this led to the realization that I couldn't party every night and that maybe my parents were actually right on more than a few occasions.

Now, I'm in the comics biz. The word has come out that Marvel has bought Heroes World, the country's third largest distributor. Rumors abound that Marvel may actually distribute their own material. In the streets ... PANIC! What will happen if Marvel distributes their own stuff? Will Marvel lower their discounts? Will they cut out the other distributors? Will those distributors exclusively carry other companies' products? Am I going to have to do business with more than two or three sources?

Now is not the time to panic. Many of the largest companies in America distribute their own product. Maybe it's time for the comics biz to grow up and move out of their folks' house.

I challenge the distributors to take a *real* interest in diversity. The fact that you have continued to place apparently limited niche products on your covers and pushed them to death rather than trying to encourage your accounts to take a different, professional or progressive/aggressive business tactic has been unfortunate. It doesn't appear to have worked—as fast as the industry grew two years ago, it shrunk just as fast, which indicates the rise and fall of speculator activity in the comics market. It's time to convince everyone that you are doing something good for the industry. How? One idea is that distributors should have educated, enthusiastic regional reps working out of each warehouse to recruit clients in an intelligent, non-speculative manner.

Publishers should see this whole thing as a chance to get their product into faces that have never seen their stuff as well as a time to get aggressive.

For those retailers who haven't realized it yet, let me clue you in ... your comic store is not a clubhouse. It is not your personal comic collection bought at wholesale prices. It is your life and your business. You are working in the service sector providing publisher goods to a customer base that needs constant attention. Act like it. The old system of comics retailing is in need of an overhaul since the old one doesn't appear to be working. Maybe you guys should get organized in a big way and tell the companies what you want. This doesn't mean that the whole thing has to be a drudgery. When hard work pays off, it pays off in more ways than financial.

There're a lot of "ifs" here. In life there always are. In the world of grownups, though, "ifs" are sometimes set aside in favor of facing reality, no matter how rough that can be. Facing reality and coming up with working solutions can make the final result better than one could imagine.

–Frank Kurtz
Editor

HERO ILLUSTRATED

March, 1995
Volume 1, Number 21
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Cover by Steve Bodnar. *Spawn* © 1995.

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"A comic shop has always reminded me of a bar, but a bar for drunks. And that's why I think it's so hard for comics to break into the mainstream, because a lot of people who will occasionally take a drink once in a while really don't like to go to a bar where the hardcore drunks are."

— Comico/Northstar's Brian Azzarello

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LETTERS

Send your thoughts to **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, *HERO ILLUSTRATED* 1920 Highland Avenue, Suite 222, Lombard, IL 60148.** You may write us via CompuServe at either **75052.1671** or **74544.1144. We apologize, but we are unable to respond personally to the letters we receive.**

A Dysfunctional Family

Dear *HERO* Magazine,

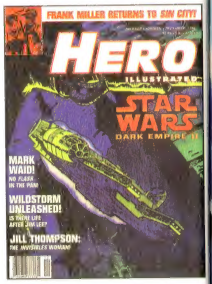
I am writing in regards to your recent content changes as well as toward your responses to the letters published in issue #18. I was slightly upset at your abandonment of the Price Guide, but I could have lived with that. However, as of today, I am no longer going to purchase your magazine based on your total disregard for the people who wrote to this magazine attempting to express their opinions. In addition, whoever was responding to the letters printed in issue #18 also was dishonest in answering some of the fans' concerns regarding the Price Guide as well as the loss of pages due to its abandonment without a subsequent decrease in the magazine's price.

To begin with, the opening editorial by Frank Kurtz was in poor taste. It was obviously directed toward *Wizard* magazine and its illustrious editor. Whether you agree with his style or not is irrelevant: We are all part of the same family and we ought to respect whatever people within this family chose to do as long as those people are not harming the family itself. I have been reading and collecting (heaven forfend!) comics for nearly 20 years and for too long our community has been disrespected, disregarded and looked down upon by too many people. These views have even rubbed off within the community to the point where many readers have worried about being labeled as "nerds," "geeks" or whatever for continuing to read comics past the age of puberty.

Recently, however, this has started to change. Comics are increasingly receipted by the mainstream, and even being considered "cool" in some areas of the country. I would argue that part of this can be attributed to your competitor's editor. Prior to *Wizard*, the state of comic fan publications had become virtually non-existent. Many publications had been canceled and many of those remaining were cheap and unenlightening. *Wizard* changed this by introducing a higher publication standard to the fanzine community, thereby setting a standard for other publications to attempt to meet. It also stressed a self-fulfilling attitude that comic readers were just as normal and just as "cool" as any other group of people. Your competitor's editor, by galloping around with famous people and sharing his experiences in his column, has helped many of our family members feel better about themselves and become more confident about what they chose to read. This, in return, has been beneficial to the entire industry. I do not think he is setting himself up on an alter [*sic*] to be worshipped; I think he is using his experiences as examples to demonstrate to our family members that it's OK (and possibly even hip) to love comics.

Now, in terms of your letters column: I was completely aghast at the way you handled the criticisms to your changes in editorial content. Prior to this issue, I was a big fan of *HERO* from the first issue onward. I thought you all handled yourselves with class: You provided informative and entertaining articles, and your articles and your magazine's sense of humor was great without being too harsh (as is often the case in *Wizard*). I also enjoyed reading your letters page: It was a lot of fun to read other people's letters and your responses to them. You were never afraid to print critical letters: You answered them, but you did so without demeaning the letter writer.

Unfortunately, your responses to the letters in issue #18 were abusive and dishonest. First, your response to Gregg Keefer's letter was appalling! Initially, he was just expressing his opinion: You chose to publish it in your column and you should have responded politely to it. Even though he personally did not love the Price Guide, he did give you a reason for why he thought it should have been maintained. Believe it or not, gung-ho readers who want to find every appearance of Black Lightning or Ambush Bug do rely on a combination of various price guides for that purpose. This is not necessarily based on comic speculation; it just might be a kid who likes a particular character and wants to get all of his appearances. I know about this because I have several hundred pages of lists that I developed as a kid using the same methods.



Furthermore, he might have written that you all do not care about your future in the business, but this is merely an opinion: It was unprofessional of you to chastise him. Also, you ought to be concerned about the information he conveyed to you about the number of cancellations caused by your change in content. This is useful information given by someone who is in a position to know and you probably ought to take it seriously.

What did Mr. Keefer get in response for giving you his opinion and some very useful information regarding the sales of your magazine? If I remember right, your response went something like this: "By the way, when

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Starting next month, no card & comic retailer will ever get the cold shoulder again.

FLEER ENTERTAINMENT

Greg Keefer says we've 'given up,' he's partially correct. Let's just say we've given up on Greg Keefer." Can you say customer service? Can you say respect for fellow family members? Can you say lack of concern about future sales? I do not know if you explicitly would ever say any of these things, but the two lines reprinted above from your magazine certainly imply these things. YOU DO NOT, AND YOU CANNOT, TREAT YOUR CUSTOMER IN THE WAY THAT MR. KEEFER WAS TREATED AND HOPE TO SURVIVE IN A VERY COMPETITIVE MARKET! Your response to his letter leads me to believe that you have given up; you are just opting for a quiet kind of suicide as opposed to a blatant form of it.

A second problem with your responses to various letters was that they were dishonest or hypocritical. You say that you will continue to publish a Price Guide in the *HERO* Files to "alert fans how much they might have to pay if they want to catch up" on the featured title. This is a nice justification for continuing to list prices, but wouldn't this justification apply toward printing an overall, general price guide as well? You could certainly make the argument that printing a general guide will also "alert fans how much they might have to pay if they want to catch up" on any title currently in existence. If this justification were used, you could still get away with publishing an overall Price Guide and probably please a lot of former fans in the process. Unfortunately, it is a superficial justification: If you all really believe that people should buy comics only to "read" them and not to "collect" them, then you should not publish prices in the *HERO* Files section because, theoretically, if a person wants a comic badly enough for its content, that person would also be willing to pay virtually any reasonable price to obtain it, thereby making the prices you printed worthless. If you really stand by your convictions regarding Price Guides, you should abandon them totally and just print a bare checklist in the *HERO* Files section.

Finally, I want to stress the fact that you depend on us for your livelihood. Your magazine does not exist as an entity independent of the community: It is based on the community and exists only by support from the community. Your comments in issue #18 succeeded in alienating me and probably a lot of other people who will not spend several hours writing to you in response. In the old days, comic fans around the world were very isolated. You need to realize that is not the case any longer. Tons of computer BBS systems have lines devoted to the comic book field and we are all very honest and explicit when discussing on-line. In the old days, one fan's dissatisfaction remained largely internal to that one fan and nothing probably ever occurred as a result of that fact. However, these days, one fan's dissatisfaction can be very persuasively shared with thousands of other people. You have to be aware of this possibility.

I will be looking forward to an apology to Mr. Keefer and to your fans as well. I used to love your magazine, and dropping the Price Guide did not change this fact. You can even possibly gain me back as well as others back to your magazine if you attempt to make amends for what you have done. Give us all an apology and do something regarding either the size of future issues or the price of future issues. Do not take us for granted and do not assume that we are incapable of seeing through deception. Failure to do otherwise will most likely be detrimental to your magazine's continued existence.

—Charles Krauss
Ottawa, KS

Frank Kurtz replies: *I don't know about you, Charles, but the idea that seeing someone "galloping around with famous people and sharing his experiences in his column, has helped many of our family members feel better about themselves and become more confident about what they chose to read" kinda gives me the creeps. Truthfully, Charles, if you like something as passionately as you obviously do, why do you need some kind of phony ego stroke to support yourself?*

Here at Sendai, I've encountered one of our female staffers' feelings about comics. She thinks they're junk. I disagree and will continue to try to prove her wrong. I won't accomplish this by saying, "But I did a voice-over for the Lethargic Lad cartoon." The comics themselves will pave the way for understanding and respect with their content.

I'm sorry if I offended you, but let it be known that I respect your opinion enough to answer it here, regardless of what famous people you may hang out with!

By the way, our old Price Guide was a lot of work and was put together with the help of quite a few good retailers who are very, very honest about their feelings in the market. We have their material on file to prove we acquired those prices by real research. Our Price Guide never included a comic that didn't exist—unlike our competitor, who was caught more than a few times showing books well in advance of their release, with prices rising every month (in some cases, up to a year before the book's actual release, e.g. Wetworks). What retailer told them that? Then again, HERO doesn't own a store ...

The editors add: *We didn't intend for our response to Gregg Keefer (which actually ran a little longer than what you excerpted) to be "appalling" or "demeaning": Rather, it was intended to point out what we felt were baffling inconsistencies in his letter. As we said back in* HERO *#18, for example, we could understand someone being upset about our dropping the Price Guide (as Keefer was)—but then he tells us the guide wasn't always right and he didn't use it to determine prices on back issues. We'll admit we were a little confused and disappointed that someone who works in a comic book store would be so quick to write off a magazine for not containing a Price Guide (which he didn't have much use for to begin with). It struck us a little like saying, "I never liked you. Why did you leave me?" If we expressed our impatience with that logic too harshly, then we apologize.*

HERO ILLUSTRATED *is a magazine about comic books. It is not a magazine about collecting "hot" comics. It offers 116 pages for $3.95. It has a lot of articles about nearly every aspect of comic books. If that sounds like a good deal, then we're happy to have you aboard. If it doesn't, well, sorry. By the way, we're well aware that people have more ways to express their discontent than ever before. That's why we print both a mailing address and a CompuServe address. Anyone who's got something to say—positive or negative—is welcome to use them anytime.*

Finally, we've learned since the publication of the editorial in question that the illustrious publisher of Wizard *is no longer be writing the editorials, which suggests that at least one person disagrees with you.*

Meanwhile, at the Inexhaustible Fount of Sage Wisdom...

HERO—

Hi, it's me again! Gather your staff



around, I'm about to empart more golden nuggets of knowledge on you undeserving skeezicks. My *last* letter, as it turns out.

Good old *HERO*, I barely know where to start. I've been reading your magazine since virtually the beginning, and I've watched you flounder, and I've seen you sail. And *boy* are you floundering *now!*

So you *finally* got rid of that *stupid* Price Guide. You finally took "a daring stand." HA! I told you jerks a year ago to do that and you're only now taking this "bold step" after much "soul searching"? Who are you kidding? I'm not naive enough to think I was the *only* person to tell you that, but I'm sure I was one of the first, so give credit where it's due, your readers!

If you *truly* want to make *maximum* use of your Reviews section, you'll ban *any* Marvel, DC, Image, etc. from it and concentrate solely on titles that are lesser-known small press. Why? Because these large company's *[sic] already* have their huge promo department working on exposure as it is (*your* mag included). Who cares what the new *Spawn* has in it except those that buy it, and THEIR *[sic]* ALREADY BUYING IT!! (Idiots!)

If your *[sic]* really serious about *reading* comics and not collecting comics, how come so many of your giveaways are Premium gold holos and (YUCK!) *Shadowhawk* CDs? You're giving away the *crap* those companys *[sic]* are sending *you!* How about passing on some of the *real* goodies that I'm sure you have sitting around?

A few last words about your mag—

Hooray for In The Works!

Go Andy Mangels!

Give Colleen Doran her own column. Her own mag. A car!

Yay Heidi MacDonald! Don't necessarily agree, but you gotta respect those prose *[sic]*!!

MFB—Is the *HERO* M's info truly bongo or does the cheese make like limburger. (Let's see how *you* like tryin' to figure that crap out! Jerk!)

And *now*, as a very special farewell, I will give you all the *true* lowdown on the comic industry. Listen up!

I've been *reading* comics for almost 25 years (and I'm only 30). I don't need that ass Gary Groth to tell me what's good or relevant or to define for me what's worthy to read. There's a world of difference between what I like and what i think is *good*, both of which are based on *personal opinion!* At least I have *that much* perspective.

In all my years of reading I've never seen comics in a bigger, more glorious age, and yet heard and seen more pathetic behavior amoungst *[sic]* its creators and fans. Comics are the single greatest entertainment media, dollar per dollar, *anywhere!* If you want to triple polybag in hopes of making big bucks—godspeed. If you want to be the Watcher and buy everything regardless of quality, more power to ya. If you want to read and enjoy and dream and escape, I'll be right there by your side, but know this:

1) You are not more intelligent, or more incisive or "hip" because you read Vertigo or Black & White independents.

2) There's nothing *wrong* with loving superheroes in comics. The world needs heroes of *all kinds* now more than ever.

3) What this medium needs now is to sit back, lighten up and enjoy itself!

It's my dream that this missive will be the *last* hyper-critical letter ever written, and upon its printing will stand as a monumental cornerstone of the moment when everyone who creates and enjoys comics decided to do just that. Create. Enjoy. Shut up.

See you later and good luck.

—Matt Ridgway
Bancroft, MI

Who Reviews The Reviewers?

Dear Sir,

I am writing to express my thanks for your review of *Cenotaph* [*HERO* #18]. I read Northstar Publications and very few in the industry will give them a chance and review them.

—Shane Dobbs
St. Cloud, MN



The Price Guide Saga Continues!

To *HERO*,

You know, I think ditching the Price Guide was about the smartest thing you could have possibly done. Just about a year-and-a-half ago, I started collecting comics and cards and I felt then, as I feel now, that the prices for some things are outrageous. I also feel that price guides add to this feeding frenzy of collectors, speculators and so on. I do agree that maybe the pages should increase, but I seem to remember when *HERO* #1 came out that, excluding the price guide, its size wasn't that great either.

I will admit that I miss some of the extras (like the ashcans, promo cards and contests), but I also realize that these types of "specials" aren't always available either. Anyway, keep on turning out a great 'zine and as to complaints about the measly 4 cents increase: Flip over your couch cushions or check your car for loose change. Heck, you can even check the parking lot for the extra pennies.

—Cheryl Frost
Sacramento, CA

NOTE: Since Cheryl wrote this letter, the price has gone back down by 4 cents, thus depriving a generation of chiropractors from the additional income generated by comics fans who refused to lift with the legs when upending their couch cushions.

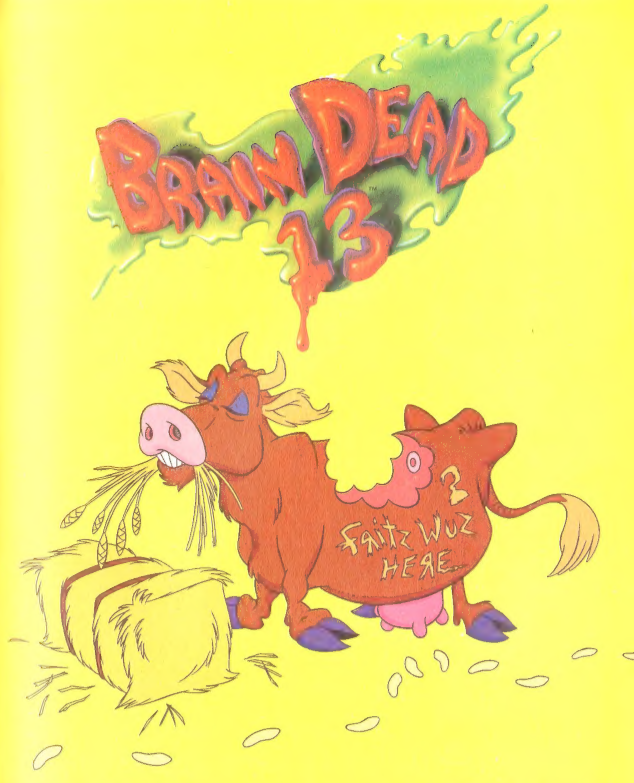
Dear *HERO*,

I just finished bagging my comic book collection ... and boy are my arms tired. Now that I'm all done, I have two big boxes of old comic bags, and I got to thinking that I shouldn't just throw them away. I was wondering if they could be recycled.

I like your decision to drop the Price Guide and I figured I'd help you figure out how to use the extra space. Classified ads. After all, isn't that what every four-color blooded collector wants?

Whatever happened to Reader Roundtable and Industry Roundtable? Bring them back please. I also like your *HERO* Insider, but I have problems with my eyes. I already wear glasses and I still have problems reading the thin lettering. The background kind of sucks a bit also. Please, even if you don't print my letter, could you fix this?

One final thing: I just want to thank everybody that makes my hobby fun, so if you're reading, THANX!



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—Ed Villanueva
Muskegon, MI

Are comic bags recyclable? That depends in part on where you live. Several of the manufacturers and distributors we asked suggested you contact your city's municipal collection department and ask if they recycle bags made from polyethylene or polyurethane. Certain cities can accommodate you; others—like Chicago—haven't been able to get any recycling program together. If your city does have one, it's worth asking them what they'll accept.

The rest of us would do well to follow your example, Ed. Thanks for writing.

And The Lord Said: You Shall Bash In Your Own Image...

Dear *HERO* people,

This is the first time I've written to any magazine of any sort. Please hear me out.

There was some Image-bashing awhile ago (who knows—maybe it's still going on!) So I thought I'd add to that (in my own sort of way):

1) Did you know if you look close enough at Prophet (drawn by Liefeld ... aw, hell, drawn by *anybody*!)'s veins, they start to resemble words?

2) How do Jim Lee's women (the ones he draws, that is) stay bent in that "L" shape? Not only is it physically uncomfortable, it's hard to maintain for long periods of time.

—Ellen
Medinah, IL

How Convenience Stores Have Changed Our Lives: Part of an Ongoing Series

Dear *HERO*,

Until recently I thought your magazine was quite stink. Then, one evening, I was in desperate need for a read—any read. Since it was the week that *Spawn* was on hiatus and the 7-11 was out of *Buttmasters: A Tour of The Anals of History*, I looked for a *Wizard*, *Sports Illustrated* or whatever. Eventually I saw *HERO* and thought, "*HERO*? That polybagged ka-ka that's a nickel more than *Wizard* and not even half as thick? Ah, what the hell." Well, let me tell you I was pleasantly surprised by what I read/saw. You have evolved from a *Wizard* ripoff with a laughable Price Guide to an excellent fan mag. Kudos! Just one thing: Add two more pages to the market report.

—Patrick Maliha
Vancouver, B.C, CANADA

Buttmasters, *huh? That's cute.*

PSYCHO LETTER

RAED OREH,

Yltneer I deciton gnihtemos taht derehtob em. *OREH* saw gnitteg renniht dna renniht tub I tn'did tnaw ot rehtob uoy. Tub tsai eussi tnew ot raf. S'tel kcabhsalf a tib. I tnew ot ym yld-neirf scimoc erots dna deksa rof, tahw esle, *OREH*. Ehc Rennwo dias ereht saw on ecirp ediug. On ecirp ediug! I llits diap rof ruoy gam. Sa syawla ereht erew taerg selcitra dna rehto ecin sesirprus, tub on ecirp ediug. I saw dam. suoiruf! Gnigar dam!!! Os I ksa, erehw si ym ecirp ediug!! I epoh siht tn'seod neppah ni eussi 71 esuaceb m'I ton gnidnah ym yenom revo rof a wef segap fo llew-nettirw selcitra. yrt ot tup erom segap ni ruoy gam dna uoy lliw evah at tsael eno lufhtiaf redaer.

—Kcin Odranip
North Olmstead, OH

P.S. This letter is backward. Please read the words separately and last letter first. Thank you.

P.P.S. What is the secret message on page 91, issue 16. Is it python as in Monty Python?

P.P.P.S. Whoever writes "*HERO ILLUSTRATED*" on the bottom of the pages apparently has a lot of free time on his hands.

Uh-huh. And you don't*?!*

Seriously, thanks for your letter, Kcin. We're sending you a* HERO *cap for your troubles. It'll also prove useful when you need to flag down the rescue team that your home planet will no doubt be sending along soon ...

Correctional Center

In HERO *#19 we responded to a letter from Teresa M. Vanmeter, asking us to list the addresses of publishing companies to whom young creators could send their submissions. It was a task we tore into with relish, adding, "We're only doing this once." Well, we wished we could do it again when WARP Graphics called us up and upbraided us (repeatedly) for listing their old address. For the record, you can write to WARP at 43 Haight Avenue, Poughkeepsie, NY, 12603. Our apologies to WARP and to confused submission senders everywhere.*

More recently, Chris Golden's Dan Brereton article in HERO *#20 fell victim to overly-zealous copy editing. First of all, it was implied that Mike Mignola had something to do with the creation of Sam & Max. In fact, Steve Purcell is the sole creator of Sam & Max. Second, Golden actually quoted Brereton as saying, "[Gene] Colan's work is what set me up to like Frazetta in the first place," not "[Gene] Colan's work is what set me up to [draw] like Frazetta in the first place" which is what appeared in the magazine.*

Finally, the Mariah Carey ad campaign to which Golden referred actually said, "The first time you heard her voice, you just knew." We're at a loss to explain why anyone felt the need to bring Columbia's sentiments from past tense to present. Our apologies to Dan Brereton, Chris Golden and the Sony Music Group. ▲



RUMBLINGS

WHAT'S SHAKING IN THE WORLD OF COMICS

Compiled by Steve Spaulding

MARVEL PURCHASES HEROES WORLD

The nation's largest comic book publisher acquires the third largest distributor

Marvel Entertainment Group sent shock waves through the comic book industry Dec. 28 when it was announced that it had purchased Heroes World Distribution Co., the nation's third largest comic book distributor.

In an interview with *Comic Book Business*, Marvel Comics Chief Operating Officer Terry Stewart explained the primary motivation for Marvel to purchase a distributor. "We bought Heroes World to be able to deal directly with retailers and in turn directly with consumers, and to be able to market and promote our own books."

Heroes World is currently a regional distributor, operating on the East Coast from Virginia to Maine; Marvel plans to expand Heroes World to distribute their product nationally. Plans for that expansion are still in the development stage, according to Stewart. "We haven't made any decisions yet. At the same time we're talking to other distributors to see what their thoughts are about the best way to maximize what we're trying to accomplish here."

Stewart refused to comment on why Marvel had not opted to purchase one of the current national distribution chains, such as Capital or Diamond, saying only that "There were a lot of reasons why we had our discussions with Heroes World, and needless to say, we thought they were the best candidate to achieve our ends."

Heroes World was formerly owned by Ivan Snyder, who will remain in charge as president, operating chiefly out of Heroes World's New Jersey offices. In a press release issued on Jan. 4, Snyder said that, "All operations at HWDC are currently proceeding as usual. There have been absolutely no changes in personnel and the entire staff is committed to providing the direct market with the same services and levels of professionalism that have always distinguished us. On a personal note, the entire Snyder family retains the same commitments and have signed long-term contracts with Marvel to ensure a continuance of service to the direct market."

Except for the change in ownership, there have been no announcements from either Marvel or Heroes World about any changes in the current manner either company does business. "We have no time frames for big announcements," Stewart said. "We're mainly concerned with trying to make this work to sell as much Marvel product as possible. So that's why we're taking our time and ... trying to get all the information we need."

At the same time, the opportunities open to Marvel now could change the shape of the comic book marketplace. Several industry leaders (such as Marvel's main competitor, DC Comics, and one of Heroes World's competitors, Diamond Distributors) have adopted a "wait and see" attitude, refusing to comment on the purchase until Marvel makes further announcements. Others have been more forthcoming. The chief concerns for many in the industry appear to be a) whether or not Marvel will choose to exclusively distribute its own books and b) whether other publishers will still be willing to distribute through a company owned by a competitor.

Jerry Slaske, Capital City Distribution:

"Capital City continues to believe that exclusive distribution arrangements do not meet the diverse needs of specialty retailers. Heroes World remains one of our competitors and will continue to be a competitor under Marvel ownership.... At the present time, we do not expect the acquisition to affect Capital City Distribution Inc. Future effects will depend on Marvel's actions. Over time, it could create new customers for Capital City."

Lou Bank of Dark Horse Comics:

"Product, demand and distribution are the three elements that create commerce.... Knowing that, it's very easy to analyze the effects this deal can have on Dark Horse. Dark Horse is in the business of producing high-quality comics; that's our product ... because consumers are always looking for top-of-the-line entertainment, that gives you demand. The third piece of the puzzle is distribution; this deal could potentially cause some delays in the distribution pipeline, but it can't kill it, particularly in the light of the strength of the other two pieces of the puzzle. So all it takes to weather such delays is capital, and our recent successes in Hollywood have certainly contributed greatly to our coffers, so no problems here."

Dan Vado of Slave Labor Graphics:

"Well, I'm leery of it. I think that if you look at Marvel's acquisitions across the board, they are one video game company short of being able to go to retailers and offer them a complete Marvel product line. What may happen is that they may entice a few retailers into not carrying other stuff, by saying, 'Well, what do you need to carry DC or Image comics for when we can set you up with Marvel comics at a better discount? And we can also offer you video games and toys and stickers and magazines and trading cards and pogs and just about every other product line that you can imagine.'"

Bill Liebowitz of Golden Apple Comics, East Coast retailer:

"I think there could be a long-term good result of this, if this galvanized the other publishers and distributors to do a better job to compete with Marvel. I would look for this to create a lot of positive changes all around."

A.P.E II GETS NEW MANAGEMENT

The second annual Alternative Press Expo (A.P.E), a convention designed to showcase the work of the small and independent comics publishers, is still scheduled to take place on May 14 at the San Jose Civic Auditorium, despite concerns that the show would have to be cancelled.

Dan Vado, the organizer of the original A.P.E and the publisher of Slave Labor Graphics found himself without the time or the resources to promote and manage A.P.E II. "With the state the market is in today, I felt I had to devote myself to my own business first," Vado said.

Luckily, the organizers of the San Diego Comic Convention heard about A.P.E.'s troubles and offered to take over as the new organizers of the event. "The Alternative Press Expo is an important part of the comics industry," said Fae Desmond, General Manager of the San Diego ComiCon, "and to have the opportunity to lend a hand certainly fits in with our mission statement."

The San Diego Comic Convention is a non-profit corporation dedicated to promoting an awareness and appreciation for comics and related popular art forms, that promises to bring additional experience and resources to the A.P.E. "Being a non-profit organization," said Vado, "there's not going to be as much pressure on them to turn a profit—or even break even—as there was with me ... they have a mailing list of nearly 90,000 names. They will be promoting the A.P.E. within their own literature for the San Diego ComiCon, and they have a greater reach. They have more respect in the marketplace in terms of their reputation for putting on events like this, and I really feel that the whole thing is going to benefit from their involvement."



According to Desmond, the ComiCon group plans "to try and retain Dan's vision as much as possible, and to that end we've kept him on as Executive Director.... Everyone on staff is looking forward to A.P.E. II. We feel that it will be a smaller venue, less flashy. Sort of the way things were when we first began doing the San Diego ComiCon."

Confirmed guests for this year's A.P.E. include Jeff Smith (*Bone*), Dave Sim (*Cerebus*), Jim Valentino (*Shadowhawk*), Evan Dorkin (*Milk & Cheese*), Batton Lash (*Wolff & Byrd*), Sarah Dyer (*Action Girl*), Roberta Gregory (*Naughty Bits*), Colin Upton (*Big Thing*), Jeff Nicholson (*Through the Habitrails*), Drew Hayes (*Poison Elves*) and Jeff Levine (*No Hope*).

Tale of One Bad Rat wins award. Bryan Talbot's 1994 story about a young runaway has won the Comic Creator's Guild Award for best limited series/story arc. "I'm glad the book has received so much recognition," said Talbot, "because the moral purpose of the book is to help abuse survivors realize and understand that they are not alone."

Archie becomes ambassador for United Cerebral Palsy. Archie Andrews will become the official ambassador for the United Cerebral Palsy Association, a group that develops and provides programs to enhance the quality of life for people with cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities. "After publishing comic books for more than 50 years, Archie Comics is very excited to implement its first causes-related marketing endeavor, especially for such a worthy charity as UCPA," said Michael Silberkleit, chairman and co-publisher of Archie Comics.

Neil Gaiman's Guardian Angel Tour to benefit the CBLDF. The Guardian Angel tour will be coming to Northampton, MA, April 9, 1995, with readings by Neil from his books *Angels and Visitations* and other stories. Seats are available for $25 (limited front row) $20, $15 and $10, with all proceeds being donated to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund. If you've never heard Neil Gaiman speak, he is more than amazing, and this is a perfect chance. Contact the Fund at 413-586-6967 or the Words & Pictures Museum (140 N. Main St., Northampton, MA) at 413-586-8545 for more information.

Taking Hollywood by WildStorm. WildStorm Productions, Jim Lee's publishing company, announced the formation of WildStorm Pictures, a new division to produce animated films. The first project to come out of the new division will be an animated version of the 1994 hit limited series, *Gen 13* that will be distributed direct-to-video. Kevin Altieri who has directed *Batman: The Animated Series* and was concept artist on Disney's *The Lion King* will oversee the $2 million project. The *Gen 13* feature is scheduled for release in early 1996.

Christmas comes early for the Bierbaums. Tom and Mary Bierbaum, the writing team from *Legion*, *Legionaries*, and the upcoming *Star, Power of the Mark* and *Superpatriot*, are pleased to announce the completion of their greatest work to date: the birth of their daughter, Emma Noël Bierbaum on Dec. 7, 1994. The issue shipped on time.

Wrightson to lend his magic to Graham Crackers Comics. Bernie Wrightson is set to make an appearance at Graham Crackers of Bloomingdale., IL, (389 Army Trail Rd.) on Saturday Feb. 25, 1995 from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. Wrightson is set to sign autographs, critique artwork and discuss his long career. On Sunday, Feb. 26 he will be a special guest at the Graham Crackers comic book/magic show at the Naperville Raddison Hotel in Naperville from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The show will feature dealer tables and a Magic tournament. Call 708-355-4310 for details.

A BUSY NEW YEAR FOR THE CBLDF

Update in the Paul Mavrides case

An appeals hearing was held on Friday, Jan. 20 in the case of Paul Mavrides, co-creator of *The Fabulous Freak* brothers. A decision is expected early in February.

The crux of the case is whether comic artwork is protected under the same rights as an author's manuscript or whether it is to be treated under California law as simply commercial artwork that is incidental to the text. Because of the taxes on commercial artwork, such a decision could mean an increase of as much as 8.25 percent in bottom-line production costs, effectively crippling many small and independent publishers.

The suit against Mavrides was brought by the California Board of Equalization. According to Sandy Presant, attorney for Mavrides, "The BOE did admit that they did not have set standards for determining what illustrations are incidental. Much like pornography, they 'know it when they see it,' was their response."

Because of the First Amendment rights involved in the case, the ACLU has become involved.



Shooting Star solidarity signing

An auction, signing and show of solidarity was scheduled for Jan. 28 at Sam Silbert's Shooting Star Comics in Glendale, CA.

Planned attendees were Neil Gaiman (*Sandman*), Howard Chaykin (*Power and Glory*), Gil Kane (*Edge*), Gilbert and Jamie Hernandez (*Love and Rockets, Birdland*) and Sandra Chang. Frank Miller (*Sin City*) was tentatively set to appear, should his schedule permit. Other participants included members of the Glendale art community.

Comic fans were invited to bring up to five items to be signed, with each autograph costing one dollar, all proceeds going to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund.

In November, Sam Silbert and his store were the subject of an investigation into a complaint from an unknown citizen that the shop was displaying "sexually explicit" comics. His store was searched by undercover detectives who confiscated more than 25 comic books and cited him for "display of indecent material." Titles seized included books published by Eros, Last Gasp, Kitchen Sink, Boneyard Press, Brainstorm, Fantaco and others.

Silbert's court date has been pushed back again, from Jan. 18 to Feb. 20.

Defense con helps raise funds

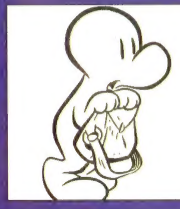
Defense Con was held over the Jan. 14-15 weekend in Chatsford, PA. Organized by Ron Jordan, the con helped raise between $3,500 and $3,600. "[Ron] generously gave all the proceeds from the door to the CBLDF and also held an auction that raised more than $1,200," according to Susan Alston, director of the fund. More than 200 people turned out to support the fund's work and see guests Doug Moench, Colleen Doran and Ted Slampyak.

The fund also received a number of donations as 1994 came to a close. While every little bit helps, the fund still has almost $40,000 worth of legal bills to deal with. Donations can be sent to:

CBLDF
PO Box 693
Northampton, MA 01061



BONE PVC UPDATE



We know that the question on everyone's mind right now is, "Will O.J. be acquitted?" And the question that inevitably comes after that is, "Where the heck is my Bone PVC?" Well, rest assured all of you die-hard Bone fans out there, it is coming. After numerous production difficulties, it looks like we have finally gotten past the problems and will be able to gear up the actual production of the PVC around the time you read this.

Bone is a cute little guy, but we have discovered that he is not the easiest character to mold in plastic. It seems that his nose and feet are a little too large in conjunction with the rest of him, and because of that, the little fella just doesn't want to come out of his mold. Now, after trying several different mold types, redesigning the figure and finally changing the material we are molding the figure out of (no longer PVC plastic, but very close), it looks like the problem is taken care of. Right now, we are awaiting the final production schedules so that we can tell everyone when it will be shipping. Please watch this space for some good news next month, and thanks for your patience!

OBITUARIES

Frank Robbins, creator of Johnny Hazard, *dies at 77*

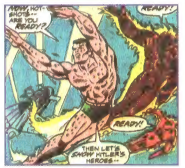
Frank Robbins, writer and artist for both DC and Marvel, and creator of the *Johnny Hazard* comic strip, died on Nov. 28 in San Miguel Allende, Mexico. He was 77 years old.

Robbins was born in Boston, MA, on Sept. 9, 1917. His artistic talents won him awards and acclaim early in his life, including several scholarships by the age of 9 and a Rockefeller grant when he was only 15. Robbins' earliest professional work was in advertising, entertainment and fine art, including gallery shows, posters for RKO pictures and the murals (which Robbins designed) for the NBC building in New York.

Robbins came to comic strips in the late 1930s, when he took over *Scorchy Smith* from creator John Terry, and drew *Lightnin' and the Lone Rider* (a strip first drawn by Jack Kirby). In 1944 he created his own strip, *Johnny Hazard*, which chronicled the adventures of a daring pilot in World War II. In the post-war years the character became a commercial aviator with a secret agent flair. The strip was syndicated by King Features until 1977.



Over a 40-plus year career, Robbins is probably best remembered for his DC and Marvel work in the 1970s. His writing credits included *The Flash*, *Superboy* and *Batman*, while he worked as an artist on *Batman*, *Detective Comics*, *The Shadow*, *Captain America*, *The Invaders* and *Ghost Rider*.



The Invaders

By the 1980s Robbins had moved to Mexico to pursue his painting and illustration work. His credits include magazines such as *Life*, *Look* and *The Saturday Evening Post*. His paintings were exhibited by the Corcoran Gallery, the Whitney Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Robbins is survived by his wife, Fran, his son, Michael Jed Robbins and his daughter, Laura Beth Cox.

Following are brief interviews with some of the people Robbins knew and worked with in the industry.

Steve Engleheart *(worked with Robbins on* Captain America *in the 1970s)*: The stuff he did at DC with the Batman, among others, was really classic material, and his style came from the Milton Caniff school, so even in the '60s I think he was somewhat underestimated.... We all have our favorites and so forth, but Frank Robbins was highly regarded by everybody.... I would say that he was interested in doing good comic books, and if you can envision that as being a noble calling, that's kind of what he did. He just did what he was asked to do and he did it with his usual panache. I think he was one of the all-time good guys.

Tony Isabella *(worked with Robbins on* Captain America *and* Ghost Rider*)*: He was one of the most fascinating

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Veteran New Yorker *cartoonist George Price dies at 93*

George Price, whose career as a cartoonist and illustrator lasted more than 50 years, died on Jan. 12, 1995.

Price was born in 1901 in Coytesville, NJ, and attended public high school in Ft. Lee, NJ. A self-taught artist, most of his early experience came from drawing underwear and hosiery ads, book illustration and from an extensive sketching trip in Europe.

In 1926 he became a regular contributor to *The New Yorker* and helped establish the magazine's rich cartooning tradition.

Price's cartoons typically depicted strange characters and bizarre, often absurd situations. Stylistically, his work is characterized by a clean, fluid line, deft composition and technical skill. His usual themes were the plight of the ordinary man and marital strife. (Although, according to *The New Yorker*'s Price obituary, the cartoonist very rarely relied on his own ideas.)

In a 1987 issue of *Comics Interview*, *Peanuts* creator Charles Schulz told Shel Dorf, "I suppose George Price would tower above most of [my favorite cartoonists] ... because of the beautiful drawings. Everything is drawn perfectly, whether it is a toaster or a dog or a chair or whatever, every line is perfect."

Collections of George Price's work include *The Good Humor Man, It's Smart to be People, Who's in Charge Here?, We Buy Old Gold, Is it Anyone we Know?, Ice Cold War, The People Zoo, George Price's Characters, My Dear 500 Friends* and *Browse at Your Own Risk*.

[*HERO* News is greatly indebted to *Palookaville* creator Seth for his help in researching this article.]

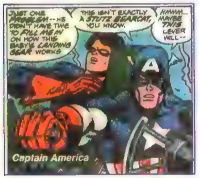
BELOW: A vintage Price cartoon from *The New Yorker*.



"Of course, this in no way obligates you to buy anything."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

guys I ever worked with. The first time we worked together I visited him; he was living in this big apartment building, and there was a suit of armor in his office, ancient weapons around and I was already in awe of the guy because, geeze, he was one of the top comic strip artists and I loved his writing at DC ... it was just incredibly fun working with the guy



He would invariably add a neat little bit or two, and then when he would pencil the things, he would pencil faster than anybody I've ever worked with. It got to the point where we worked so well together because he knew how I wrote. Before I even scripted the stuff, he would lay in balloons, because he would know where I would be putting the copy ... what can I say? Great writer, great artist, terrific professional, wonderful guy to work with.

Roy Thomas (*worked with Robbins on Marvel's* Invaders)**:** He was great, because unlike so many artists I've worked with, he actually knew something. I mean, an artist might have a lot of talent, but they don't really have a lot of background to go with it. For example, *Invaders* was a WWII-era book, and he added so many little touches of his own because he knew the material. He would toss in the right kinds of cars, the right kind of clothes and hats.... As a superhero artist he had some problems, because he wasn't really a superhero artist. That wasn't his main interest, and he had always done adventure heroes in a more realistic setting ... but he was so good, he told such a good story. Some people don't bring a lot to the party, but Frank, he brought hats, noisemakers and everything you wanted. Part of this is because he also had a good sense of writing, he was a writer himself and therefore, even when he was drawing the book he knew how to tell stories, how to pace it out, how to dialogue, so he could give you the good situations.

COSMIC THING

Marvel's Mark Gruenwald on one-fifth of Marvel Comics


Mark Gruenwald

Thanks to Marvelution, Marvel's editorial department has been split into five separate lines. In this, the first of a series of interviews (space permitting) with Marvel's new line editors, HERO talks with Mark Gruenwald, who is in charge of the Marvel Heroes and Cosmic Powers books.

With the X-books or the Spider-books, those editors are dealing with several titles that grew out of a single one. Yours are more diverse. How are the Marvel Heroes and Cosmic Powers books grouped together?

I think the unifying factor among my books is that they're Marvel's classic characters. I've got most of the mainstream Lee-Kirby characters and their direct descendants, so I feel like I've got the core of the Marvel universe covered on Earth with the world's mightiest heroes, and in space with the cosmic guys.

Your first interline crossover is called "Atlantis Rising." Can you tell us more about it?

We realized that we had a number of phenomenally interesting and enduring concepts that premiered in the *Fantastic Four* book: Atlantis, the Inhumans, even Warlock as Him and Monster Island ... and we said "Let's play around with these." We didn't include anything in there that didn't on some level connect with the *Fantastic Four* and their glorious history of 33 years. So there's a unifying principle in that, and we weave them all in a different place than we found them.

What do you see for the future of the line, if that's not too open-ended a question?

We're discontinuing *Namor*. His last issue comes out the month before "Atlantis Rising" and leads most directly into it. *Warlock* ends the month "Atlantis Rising" ends and ties in in its own peculiar way ... so this is really a source of a Marvel cross-continuity and synergy that I like seeing. The way that it's being planned now that it hasn't been in the past is looking at a whole set of books as a source for cross-book fertilization. I just want to restore the early Marvel Universe feeling that anybody might show up anywhere, and that things in one book have a bearing on the next, which, with the Marvel line getting as large as it was, was a little more difficult to accomplish, but now if I just look out for my neck of the woods I can do it at least in the 12-15 books that are my area.



IT'S JUST WRONG!

There are times here at "It's Just Wrong!" when we stray from the true path and feature something that is just odd, just funny or just stupid. Then we find something like this Princess Jasmine cup with a straw sticking out of her head and our mission is clear once more. Our friend Paul Dini *(Batman: The Animated Series)* was kind enough to send us these photographs, and from the second we opened the envelope, it was as if all the Elvis nightlights, *South of Sunset* video cassettes and aromatherapy home starter kits were swept away by some cleansing fire.

Seriously, one wonders if there's a Disney exec out there with a chemical imbalance. From the dopey scenes depicted on the side, to the way her eyes gaze up at you adoringly as you slurp out of her noggin, this Princess Jasmine collector's cup is a peerless example of nouveau American kitsch. I mean, would you drink out of anything that had cleavage (or that literally allowed you to suck someone's brains through a straw)? Yum!



PREMIERE EDITION
FLEER ULTRA
SKELETON WARRIORS™
SOLD
PRINCE LIGHTSTAR
SKELETON WARRIORS
BAD TO THE BONE! JANUARY, 1995

IN THE WORKS

COMING SOON TO A COMIC STORE NEAR YOU...

IMAGE '95 SECRETS REVEALED!!!

CLEVELAND'S CRIME SCENE ... DC'S GIVE-AND-TAKE DEAL ... WELCOME TO ASTRO CITY ... BATMAN GETS SPANKED

ACCLAIM

The buzz on Mike Deodato Jr. has been incredible lately, helping catapult sales on *Wonder Woman*. Now Valiant has claimed him for a few jobs—and it's not even a "babe book!" You'll get a triple-dose of Deodato in May: *Turok Yearbook 1995*, written by Mike Grell, and *Turok* #29 & 30. Elsewhere in the Valiantverse Jackson Guice has joined as the artist on *Eternal Warrior*, starting this May.

Meanwhile, Windjammer has added another seasoned veteran to its roster: Neal Adams. In May, *Valeria the She-Bat* will be a two-issue biweekly miniseries. *Knighthawk* is a six-part biweekly miniseries starting in May, and *Samuree* begins a four-issue biweekly run in June. These series are all new, and (important note for those familiar with Adams) the writing and art are already finished! Adams has had a hand in all three miniseries, so fans of his artwork will want to take a look.

ASTRO COMICS

B. C. Boyer is joining the self-publishing arena when *Hilly Rose's Space Adventures* begins in late May. It's incredibly difficult to categorize this book—on the surface, it's an adventure in the spirit of *Terry and the Pirates*, but Boyer has also included adorable critters in the *Bone/Pogo* vein, a dollop of "Good Girl" style art, and a healthy dose of satire. We can't categorize it, but it is definitely a fun comic worth taking a look at!

CALIBER

Bet you didn't know about Cleveland's extensive underworld network ... Brian Michael Bendis has provided fans of crime comics a fascinating look into the criminal side of the Midwestern city through his *A.K.A. Goldfish* series of one-shot specials. In May, the third special—*A.K.A. Goldfish: Queen*—continues the series, throwing the spotlight on the female leads. "What motivates a criminal after they have everything they want?" Bendis asks, and this comic will present his answer.

Before that, though, Caliber is declaring April "*Negative Burn* Month." The award-winning anthology will feature a Moebius cover on #22, which also previews Caliber's upcoming series, *Exit*, by Nabiel Kanan. Two characters who debuted in *Negative Burn* #1 will get #1's of their own: *Kilroy is Here*, by Joe Pruett and Ken Meyer Jr., begins a bi-monthly regular series. Beginning with #1, Pruett will begin to reveal clues to Kilroy's origin. *The Apparition: Abandoned* #1 is a story of "physical and spiritual abandonment, presented with Caliber's new high-quality "Presentation Format," is written by Pruett with fully-painted art by Michael Gaydos.







series of *Dominique* specials continues with *Dominique: Killzone* #1 by Lisa and Charles Moore with art by Casey Jones, another story from Dominique's days as a "Repo man." Finally, the hard-to-find "Black Mist" stories from *Negative Burn* are being collected in *Black Mist: Anguish of the Xotl*.

DARK HORSE

The Mask movie took a comic book character and turned him into a flesh-and-blood Tex Avery cartoon; now Dark Horse continues to pay Avery his due respect with *Wolf & Red*, the first of three three-issue miniseries. Wood-ful Wolf" spotlights the lustful Wolf pursuing Red Hot Riding Hood with the help of Cupid—except Cupid's after the "gaw-juss" Red as 'Lovestruck Lumberjacks" highlights that American master of frightening calm: Droopy! These stories will gleam on the surface, so all ages can read them, but the undercurrents are sure to drag all of your warped minds straight to the gutter.

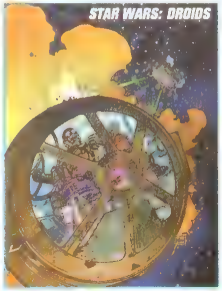
The *Aliens vs. Predator: War* series, serialized in the pages of *Dark Horse Insider*, will be released in one volume this May. Along with the original story by Randy Stradley and Chris Warner, it will include all-new artwork and a cover by Richard Corben. This volume will serve as a prelude to a full-blown *AvP: War* miniseries coming later in May.

Up to now, we've been treated to a variety of miniseries from Dark Horse featuring the pride and joy of Papa Lucas. In April, though, DH launches the first *ongoing Star Wars* series in nearly a decade. *Star Wars: Droids* features Artoo and Threepio, who have always been the lynchpins of the *Star Wars* saga. Written by Ryder Windham with art by Ian Gibson, this should help whet the appetite of Star Warriors as they wait for that next film.

Dark Horse is changing their attitude toward "Comics' Greatest World." The line is rechristened "Dark Horse Heroes" this April and ... well, for lack of a better explanation, continuity is going out the window. No more worrying about how all the books fit together, no more worrying about crossovers, no more of the pressures of a shared universe. Instead, "DHH" will allow the five ongoing series to be the masters of their own destiny, to allow the characters and creative teams to rule the books. The fifth series, debuting in April, is *Ghost*. Eric Luke will be writing the series, and you'd better have those salivary glands in order for the art by Adam Hughes and Mark Farmer!

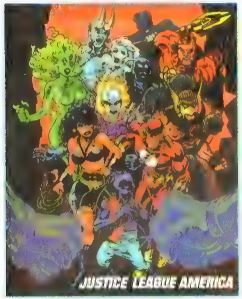
DC

DC's latest updates are resulting in a mixed reaction. Beginning in April, many of DC's books will be upgraded in paper quality. The *Superman* and *Batman* lines (with the exception of *Batman Adventures*) will be produced on "Miraweb" paper, basically an upgraded and glossier stock, with a resulting increase in price on many books: $1.95 each. *Babylon 5* is the first book going to "Fracote" paper, costing $2.50. Finally, several Vertigo books will step up to "Rebax" format (formerly referred to as "Deluxe"), costing $2.50 each. As for the *rest* of





IN THE WORKS





BELOW: "SAMARITAN" FROM ASTRO CITY; PAGE FROM ASTRO CITY

DC's line, the paper isn't changing but the prices are: books that were $1.50 are now $1.75, and $1.95 books are now $2.25. Don't be surprised if Marvel follows suit in the near future...

The current roster of the JLA and Extreme Justice are coming together for one massive battle when *Justice League America* hits the centennial mark. Lord Havok, perennial nemesis to the JLA, returns when the league opens its doors. There's a secret behind Havok's resurrection, though, and it promises to shake the team to its core. *JLA* #100 will be available in a standard version or a holographic foil special cover, by the regular team of Gerard Jones, Chuck Wojtkiewicz, and Bob Dvorak

DC's promise to bring the New Blood characters to prominence continues when the four-issue *Loose Cannon* miniseries begins this April. The "mood-ring superhero" will turn Metropolis into a war zone, in a story by Jeph Loeb and Adam Pollina.

Paradox Press has already disgusted readers with its *Big Book of Urban Legends*. The *Big Book* series may be even more revolting when Paradox tackles *The Big Book of Death*. That's right, 224 pages devoted completely to mankind's final mystery. Topics included will be spontaneous human combustion, methods of body disposal, weird and stupid ways to die, and those fascinating techniques of capital punishment. Bronwyn Carlton has provided 71 articles for this tome (bet he's a lot of fun at parties), and each will be illustrated by a different artist. It's coming on April 25th; isn't that something worth living for?

IMAGE

Just in the nick of time, our intrepid *HERO* staff got it's chocolate-stained hands on Image's "Master Plan" for 1995. With no further ado, here are some of the surprises we discovered:

• *Berzerkers*, a four-issue miniseries coming in May by Rob Liefeld and Eric Stephenson, features the characters from the first *Youngblood* miniseries

• *Black & White* becomes an ongoing series this summer, by Art & Pamela Thibert and Kurt Hathaway

• The *Black Razors* will be spotlighted in a four issue miniseries by Dan Norton and Chuck Gibson

• *Bloodpool*, the Youngblood cadet program, will be the focus of an ongoing series by Robert Napton, John Stinsman, and Jamie Mendoza starting this Summer

• *Brass*, which is threatening to become Image's *Black Lightning*, is on the schedule again for sometime in 1995. Richard Bennet will handle art and story, with Aron Wiesenfeld co-writing

• A second *Deadly Duo* four-issue miniseries is slated for April, written by Erik Larsen with art by John Cleary

• *Doom's IV* returns as an ongoing series this summer by Robert Napton and M. C. Wyman.

• *Grifter* begins his ongoing series in the midst of the "Wildstorm Rising" crossover this Spring, written by Steve Seagle with a rotating art team.

• *Knightstrike* flashes back to the pre-superhero days of Chapel, Spawn, Duke, Cabbot, Battlestone, and Dutch in a four-issue miniseries by Brian Witten, Richard Horie, and Mark Moralos.

• *Mighty Man* stars in a four-issue miniseries this summer from Erik Larsen, Ben Herrera, and Mike Christian

• Formerly known as *Prophet 3000*, *Prophet Unleashed* will launch a six-issue run this fall with story and art by Dan Panosian

• The *Star* miniseries by Tom & Mary Bierbaum, Ben Herrera, and Mike Christian is down for a Spring release.

• *Superpatriot*'s second miniseries from Keith Giffen, Tom & Mary Bierbaum, and Dave Johnson is also ready for a Spring launch. (Hint: Highbrow's going to have a massive output this June!)

• *The Legend of Supreme*, a three-issue miniseries by Keith Giffen, Robert Loren Fleming, Jeff Johnson, and Dan Panosian, has been rescheduled for a Fall launch

• *Vanguard* will continue to appear an a series of miniseries written by Gary Carlson. Scot Eaton, Gary Frank, and Frank Fosco are all on tap as artists

• *Voodoo/Zealot: Children of the War* will be a one-shot special by Steve Seagle and Michael Lopez, due (are you used to this yet?) this Spring

• *WildStar* is once again on the schedule. *WildStar: Ground Zero*, by Al Gordon and Chris Sprouse, is a two-issue miniseries telling how WildStar *got* his star—then Al Gordon is prepared to launch the ongoing series at about the same time.

But wait, there's more! Kurt Busiek's *ASTRO CITY* (capital letters intentional) has found a new home at Image Comics. Written by Busiek with art by Brent Anderson, *ASTRO CITY* features "a modern-day metropolis that boasts superheroes, supervillains, mad scientists, monsters, the occasional talking gorilla, a few million inhabitants—everything one needs for a sprawling superhero saga." The story will be told from a variety of perspectives—from the "everyman" Busiek became famous for in *Marvels* to the most titanic of heroes. Covers for *ASTRO CITY* are being supplied by Busiek's *Marvels* co-conspirator Alex Ross, who also designed many of the characters you'll see. Busiek wants to launch *ASTRO CITY* this August

Also missing from the schedule was Todd McFarlane's intent to continue doing *Spawn* miniseries. Alan Moore who wrote the *Violator* and upcoming *Badrock vs. Violator* miniseries, will be writing another miniseries which compares Spawn to some even more popular denizens of the night. Tony Daniel, known for his work on *X Force* and *Gambit and the Externals*, is joining TMP as the artist for this miniseries and many more to come

MARVEL

You wanted *one* book that could be read separate from any other title, priced at a reasonable level, and any issue can be picked up and understood right away. Ask, and you shall receive: beginning in June, Marvel will release *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*. *UToS-M* will be written by Kurt Busiek and penciled by Patrick Oliffe. It's set during Spidey's high school days, and will weave in and out of the *Amazing Spider-Man* continuity in such a way that it will never contradict the *ASM* stories—though readers who have not seen those older tales will not be confused. New villains will be introduced, classic villains will appear in new stories, the supporting cast will expand, and other interesting wrinkles will be added to Marvel's flagship character. Best news of all, though: each issue will only be 99¢!

PENTHOUSE COMICS

There's been a fair amount of buzz running through the comics community about a Batman story submitted by Moebius to DC Comics—one so bizarre that DC refused to print it. Nonetheless, the story's been running around the comics community for some time, becoming the first comic published via fax machine. Everyone who read this *warped* story was dying to see it printed. It took a little alteration, but *Penthouse Comix* #7 will feature "Batman Meets Depressman" this Spring. It's a delightful tale of psychological conflicts, Oedipal confusion, and exactly how strange a guy in a bat. . oops, I meant a *rat* costume can be!

TRIBUNE MEDIA SERVICES

The classic characters of *Terry and the Pirates*, created by Milton Caniff, will return to the comics page beginning in March. Catch is... it's not the comic *books*. *Terry and the Pirates* will be a syndicated strip carried in newspapers nationwide, and we've got a sample strip for you right here.



TERRY AND THE PIRATES

MEANWHILE

MORE COOL STUFF THAN YOU CAN SHAKE A STICK AT

By Frank Kurtz and Rob Holly

ULTRAVERSE IS ON ITS WAY!

...Malibu's Heroes To Hit Store Shelves in 1995



Toy Fair is only a few weeks away and we're still getting more info than we ever expected. Let's get to this expanded Meanwhile right now.

ULTRAFORCE=ULTRACOOL

As reported in a previous issue, Malibu's Ultraforce characters are getting their own line of action figures by Galoob. The great folks there sent along a couple of shots to give us an idea of what we can expect.

Look for Prime, Prototype Hardcase, Topaz, Ghoul, Primevil, NME, Sludge, Rune, Lord Pumpkin, Night Man and Atalon figures to be released sometime in the fall. We should have more shots from Toy Fair next issue

DATA IN RED=GOLD

Yes, Virginia, the Data in the red suit figure *does* exist. Rumors have flown around about this action figure which truly exists.

Unfortunately, it's already getting big bucks through dealers at conventions. What's the easiest way to get it?

1) This figure was offered through J.C Penney's Christmas catalog as a Star Trek Next Gen four-pack

2) It can only be ordered through that company. Don't delay ... or you may be spending much, much more to get it later



STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE LINE EXPANDS

Speaking of Star Trek figures, Playmates quietly released a new assortment of figures in its Deep Space Nine line. In a wacky marketing move, three of the six figures are from Star Trek: The Next Generation (four if you count Miles O'Brien in his Starfleet Duty Uniform). The figures are Picard, Thomas Riker and Q, all in DS9 uniforms. Miles O'Brien, Jadzia Dax and Dr. Julian Bashir, all in Starfleet Duty Uniforms. By now you'll have to use the Star Trekulator to figure out how many Star Trek figures exist

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THAT DS9 GAME/TOY CROSSOVER?

As of this time, Playmates is still planning to have an exclusive *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* mail-in figure available only by buying the DS9 video game. The game, scheduled for release in April, will be available in either SNES or Sega. Previously, the figure was announced to be Jake Sisko, but that figure will be released in the new DS9 assortment, hence the change to Ben Sisko with an as-yet-undetermined difference (maybe he'll be Gabriel Bell). We should have more info for you next month.

ENTER FREELY AND OF YOUR OWN WILL...

Screamin' Products has yet another great monster kit on the way. This time, they have created a companion for their DeNiro Frankenstein monster kit with Coppola's Dracula Previously, Horizon put out two kits tied into this film (Dracula in armor and Dracula in bat form). At the time, Horizon announced the old man version, but didn't release it. Now, Screamin' has come through with their own unique take. This 1/4-scale kit is designed in a "floating" pose and will stand 20 inches when fully built. The kit also includes a 7-inch, flat-backed, gargoyle wall plaque to display with the figure. It should be in stores now with a suggested retail of $64.95.



WILDC.A.T.S & TINTIN IN VIDEO STORES!

Sony Wonder video has a ton of cool TV shows making their way into video stores and the hearts and minds of everyone.

The hit Saturday morning cartoon of *Jim Lee's WildC.A.T.s* should be out right now with two volumes. The first volume includes episodes "Dark Blade Falling" and "Heart of Steel." Volume two contains "Cry of the Coda" and "The Evil Within." Each tape contains a temporary tattoo



The Tintin episodes you may have seen on HBO and Nickelodeon are getting video release The first two tapes will have the episodes. "The Secret of the Unicorn" and "Cigars of the Pharoah.' These may be some of the greatest comics in the world The animated versions stayed incredibly faithful to the original stories. I can't recommend the videos or the original books enough!



Also on the slate are two tapes, each of *Tales of the Cryptkeeper, Mega Man, Beavis and Butt-head* and *Rocko's Modern Life*. They're also releasing the first volume of *The Best of Liquid Television* from MTV. The first tape includes "mani Mani," "Aeon Flux," "Stick Figure Theater" and the birth of Beavis and Butt-head in "Frog Baseball."

All the tapes mentioned above have a suggested retail price of $12.95 except *Beavis and Butt-head* at $14.95



SUPERHEROIC VIDEO GAMES!

There's tons to talk about, but we just couldn't let this issue go by without giving you a sneak peak at video games to come featuring Spidey, Judge Dredd, Green Lantern and an incredible version of Lobo As more details come in, we'll clue you in



SPARE PARTS



HEY, KIDS! COMEDY!

Before there was a David Letterman, before there was Jay Leno, before there was Conan O'Brien, there was Bob & Ray. Like Robin Williams and Mork, Bob & Ray were [illegible] from this [illegible] were [illegible] they had [illegible] Vintage [illegible] four hours [illegible] to CBS [illegible] minutes [illegible] lar will [illegible] will finish [illegible] (Available [illegible] For more [illegible] LAUGHS!

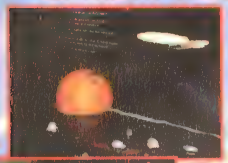
WHAT'S IN STORE?

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ISLAND OF MISFIT TOYS

TOY FAIR '94

Toy Fair '95 is on the horizon. Soon we'll be seeing what lies ahead (as will you next issue). It occurred to us, though, that there were toys we saw last year that just never came out. Some insist these never existed, but we have the photographic proof and will show you the toys that never happened ... yet.





Rob Holly is still crying about these no-shows. Besides the Classic Enterprise, there were plans for a Ferengi Marauder ship and the Starship Excelsior.







Also part of the Classic line was a Phaser rifle. Besides that, we saw the Starship Enterprise Flight Control Simulator. Forget those talking figures like Picard and Data. The good news is that we saw a Dixon Hill figure from the Dixon Hill playset. Now how about Data and Dr. Crusher? We also expect you will see the Cardassian Warship.

One of our art directors, Juli, is still waiting for the rest of the Elvis dolls to come, with the brass ring being this Elvis and Priscilla wedding set.



We thought the Skeleton Warriors were pretty cool, but a few items never saw the light of day. The only character from the series without an action figure was Talyn. Too bad. Below are a massive tank and a castle that is just way too cool. We must admit, though, that the castle was intended for release with the second year of Warrior figures.







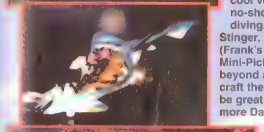
Just in case you thought there were too many Flintstone figures, here's one more we really liked. Because these are selling at Toys 'R' Us for a buck, don't count on ever seeing this oddball gem.







For no-shows, seaQuest DSV should have an island all to itself. At Toy Fair, we felt these were absolutely the most detailed figures and accessories we saw. Regardless of what we thought of the TV show, we intended to buy all those cool vehicles. Among the no-shows were the deep-diving, two-man craft at the left, the Stinger, the Renegade Delta 4 Submarine (Frank's personal favorite), the seaQuest Mini-Pick-Up at the upper right was detailed beyond anything we had ever seen and the craft they named the series after. It would be great to see these (and maybe a few more Darwins as well) but the series looks to be sinking pretty soon.













JusToys Star Wars bendies looked great, but we never saw them again. Maybe this year. They also announced a line of talking Star Wars figures that was never seen.





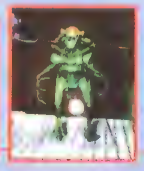


Kenner's Action Masters have been met with somewhat reserved enthusiasm that suggests to us that you're not likely to see more Star Wars double, Four or Collector packages. Unfortunately, you may never see the Reign of the Supermen set (or Doomsday for that matter) or the Batman set with Bats, Bane, Azrael as Batman and Robin. Maybe they'll just do action figures of Supes and Star Wars like we've heard (and witnessed in one case).



The Aliens/Predator line of toys may have run their course, which is unfortunate because a few good ones that were never released. Scheduled to be released were the Crab Alien, the Alien King, the Invisible Predator (the mail order one you should have by now), the Dragonfly Alien and another big Predator (which we have no idea about). Take a look and weep, Alien fans.









MEANWHILE

CARDS ILLUSTRATED

by Don Butler

Kids love undead antiheroes Perhaps the most eagerly anticipated card set of the last couple of years is being readied for an April release. Spawn, the Todd McFarlane–created hit from Jim Lee's WildStorm Productions will be an oversized series of 150 cards that retell the stories from the comic's first 25 issues



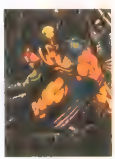
Contributing artists include Todd MacFarlane, Jim Lee, Jim Valentino Whilce Portacio, Bill Sienkiewicz, Jerry Ordway, J. Scott Campbell, Mike Greel, George Perez, Sam Kieth, Jae Lee and Travis Charest No word yet if the series will include a Viking Spawn-on-a-stick card, commemorating the greatest action figure of all time

Chase cards include a 12-card painted subset by Sienkiewicz. Joe Chiodo Joe Phillips and Ken Steacy. Another subset includes photographs of the Spawn action figures the set is rounded out by a ToddChrome card of Spawn in his new costume. Also look for autographed cards by McFarlane, Lee and others

Fleer's Marvel Metal set, which will hit April 3, features enhancements up the wazoo: 3-D prismatic foil engraving, stamping and lamination on every card and computer-generated images on every card. The set includes 138 cards

Pencilers for the series include George Perez, Ron Lim, Darick Robertson and Ken Lashley

Chase cards include three different levels. Silver Flashers (a silver-foil etched version of one of the 137 basic set cards with updated power ratings, available one per pack); 18 Metal Blasters (dimensionally enhanced foil and original computer-generated artwork, available 1:2 packs); and 18 Gold Blasters, which features the Metal Blaster characters framed in gold and available 1.3 packs



The Playboy Chromium Cover Set I from Sports Time, shipping in February will feature 100 covers from Playboy's 40-year history. Chase cards include an 18-card Refractor series of illustrated covers (three cards per box), a redemption card good for a 12-card refractor set highlighting celebrity covers (one in every 18 boxes), and a sweepstakes giving away 25 trips to a party at the Playboy Mansion



Also from Sports Time: a 100-card series featuring scenes from cult TV fave *Baywatch*. A total of 2,000 hobby cases will be produced. Killer subsets include Baywatch Confidential (suggested sample card "Dear Mitch: My swimming suit is way too tight. Can you check into this? C.J." "C.J.—We just don't have the budget for it. You'll have to wear it that way the rest of the season Mitch.."), Baywatch Beach Talk (suggested sample card: "Hi, I'm C.J. This is a flotation device." "Hi, I'm a slacker beach dude. I bet it is ") and Baywatch Rescue. Chase sets include Rainbow cards, platinum cards and autographed cards

Wizards of the Coast is reviving cards from out-of-print Magic: The Gathering sets. An assortment of Arabian Nights, Antiquities, Legends, The Dark and Fallen Empires will be included in M:TG's first unlimited expansion set, Chronicles, which will hit this summer. Cards will be in print for as long as demand justifies it; unlike the black-bordered first-series cards, however, the reprints will have white borders. Expect to see more cards from Legends than from any other expansion series

WOC will release its first social card game, The Great Dalmuti, in February The game was created by Magic: The Gathering orginator Richard Garfield

Comic Images' Bone series scheduled for April, gets the chromium treatment. The 90-card series will encompass the storyline from *Bone* #11-16; all cards will be colored by *Bone* cover colorist David Reed The chase card list includes six MagnaChrome cards featuring the covers of *Bone* #11-16, a three-card MagnaChrome series focusing on Thorn: a Medallion card and an uncut sheet of six cards. Suggested retail price for a pack of seven cards will be $1 89-2.29

Big cards—we mean really big cards—are back. Yeah, Generations Star Trek Cinema Collection, Star Wars Widevision and WildC.A.T.S cards were "standard" (i.e. Sandman-sized) oversized cards, but thanks to the success fo Fleer's FleerPrints and FPG's Colossal cards (those mucho grande comic-sized cards), we'll see even more big cards in 1995. FPG will release Colossa-

MEANWHILE WITH A FLAIR!

Fleer's promoting its high-end Flair cards as the 1994 Marvel year in review, covering all the significant spandex happenings from The House of Ideas (apparently Barbie's poolside spat with Ken didn't make the cut). We wanna give a box of Fleer Flair cards to you—just send us your list of five unused Marvel characters and what they're doing today. The best response get the box! What happened to Tapping Tommy, The Kangaroo, Gog, Cyclone, The Grizzly, The Stalker from the Stars. Zodiac and Rocket Racer? Are we to believe The Mimic is Captain Marvel dead? Send a postcard with your five best guesses to: Flair card contest, c/o *HERO ILLUSTRATED*, 1920 Highland Ave., Suite 222, Lombard, IL 60148!



Cards II in April (including some very excellent Alien/Pellucidar images from Joe Jusko). Sometime in 1995 Topps will produce MasterVisions, chase-format cards featuring artwork from Star Wars Galaxy I and II

ON THE PRESSES

WildStorm Gallery, scheduled for May from WildStorm Productions, will include original paintings of WildStorm characters from the likes of Jamie Bell, Boris Vallejo, Dan Brereton, Dave Dorman, Jon J Muth, Jerry Ordway, Jim Lee and Matt Wagner

Look for 123 oversized cards and a tie-in to Homage Studios' nine-title comic book crossover Kitchen Sink has planned a 36-card boxed set featuring classic Spirit artwork ($12.95). Cards will begin in March. Will Eisner will design 400 uncut sheets ($40) ... Coming from FPG this summer: a second series of 60 heavy-stock cards featuring Joe Chiodo's take on the Edgar Rice Burroughs universe,

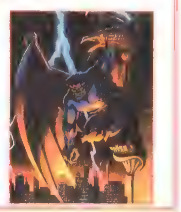


a 90-card series of art by Charles Vess and a 90-card series of work by Arthur Suydam ... Look for a set of cards focusing on William Tucci's *Shi* from Comic Images in August ... Fleer's May/June schedule includes two series of Batman Forever cards, MTV (a look at the animated shows, with Brothers Grunt, The Head and more Beavis & Butt-head), Ultra Spider-Man and Apollo 13 (the Tom Hanks/Kevin Bacon movie) ... Upcoming releases from SkyBox will include Vertigo II, Ultraverse III, Aladdin II (possibly featuring scenes from the next direct-to-video sequel), the Prophet Master Series (with Stephen Platt art), Simpsons Master Series and Disney Premium series. Also, the April-shipping Youngblood cards will include a Badrock SkyDisc.



Coming up in *CARDS ILLUSTRATED* #16:

Tonight's episode: "Tastes great, like a murder should!" *CI* spotlights Jonathan Frakes, Vampirella, cartoon cards, Clyde Caldwell, Gargoyles, vampires, the lowdown on the scarcest Superman: Man of Steel cards and a chance to win an entire set of Star Trek: The Cinema Collection! All this plus the recipe for an amazing tonic that will improve your snow globe collection! Look for the Gargoyles on the cover!



MEANWHILE CONTEST-O-RAMA

YOU COULD WIN

WildC.A.T.S COVERT-ACTION-TEAMS ACTION FIGURES!





Jim Lee's WildC.A.T.s is © & ™ 1995 Aegis Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved. TV series is ©1995 Nelvana, Ltd.

This is an easy one, gang! Playmates has sent us a bunch of extremely low-numbered WildC.A.T.s action figures that they want us to give to you! All you have to do is write a 50 word paragraph on who your favorite WildC.A.T. character is and why. We'll pick the best three from all entries and send the winners sets of figures (did we say really, extremely low numbered?). The deadline is March 31, 1995. Just send these cards and letters to WildC.A.T.s Contest-O-Rama, c/o *HERO Illustrated*™, 1920 Highland Ave., Suite 222, Lombard, IL 60148. If you don't enter, you can't win!







VEROTIK

The New Covenant

Mature Reader"

	$2.95	X	
	$4.00	X	
	$2.95	X	
JAGO	$2.95	X	
DEATH	$3.95	X	
PHAT	$9.95	X	
	$4.95	X	
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FOR EACH ADDI

IN MARCH

THIS

HOLLYWOOD HEROES

ANDY MANGELS' WHAT'S HAPPENING ON FILM, VIDEO AND TV

With 37 major genre films and almost two-dozen genre TV shows and animated series all due in 1995, fans will be very busy. Each month, you can catch the most up-to-date news here, with exclusives on your favorite sci-fi/fantasy/horror/animated TV and movie projects!



ABC

TV's oddest love triangle heats up even more this month on *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures Of Superman*. Following the return of Lex Luthor, an ambitious TV reporter (Raquel Welch) unmasks the man of steel in "Top Copy" (Feb. 19), and Bronson Pinchot reappears in "Return of the Prankster" (Feb. 26)—this time with a device that freezes people temporarily! Then, Perry's son Jerry and Lois face "Lucky Leon" (March 5), in an attempt to stop the Man of Steel from becoming part of a terrorist plot to steal nuclear weapons. In "Resurrection" (March 12), a germ-paranoid villain creates a pill that simulates death, which allows him to break the greatest criminal masterminds out of jail. Will he be able to rid the world of germ-infested humans—and Kryptonians? A *Lois & Clark* rerun will air on March 19.

Sony-Wonder has made an agreement with Kevin Eastman to co-produce his new *Underwhere* special for ABC. The 90-minute show will be both live-action and animated. Sony reps say, "*Underwhere* is a fantastic make-believe world filled with high adventure and magical characters."

CBS

Those wondering about CBS's animated Saturday morning *Mask* series should know that Jim Carrey will not be doing the voice. That job goes to Rob Paulsen (Raphael of the *Turtles* and Mighty Max). Duane Cappizzi (who animated *Alf* and *Aladdin*) is the show's head writer, and Gary Hartle is producer. Film Roman will be doing the animation for next fall's three new episodes.

NBC

Tensions mount for the cast of *Earth 2* this month. In "Better Living Through Morganite, Pts. 1 & 2" (Feb. 19 & 26), unsettling earthquakes bring a valuable ore to the surface, and Yale's behavior becomes erratic. Then, Alonzo's dreams begin to drive him crazy, and Bess is forced to establish a food-trading system with the natives in "Natural Born Grendlers" (rescheduled to March 5). The series is preempted on March 12, but returns with a new episode on March 19.





With a lot of added computer-generated imaging (CGI) effects on *seaQuest DSV*, genre fans are in for fun on upcoming sweeps episodes. The seaQuest investigates a sinking island in "Watergate" (Feb.19), leading to a mythological confrontation between the Greek gods Minerva and Neptune! Next up, comics fan and genre star Mark Hamill joins with *ex-Adam 12* star Kent McCord to help the Questers fight invading aliens in "Dream Weaver" (Feb. 26). Following that, mind readers strike in "Alone." Look for Anson Williams (better known as *Happy Days'* Potsie) to direct two more episodes this season, following his crocodile tale back on Jan. 8's "Meltdown."

FOX

The long-awaited animated *Spider-Man* premieres Feb. 4. Spencer Smythe and Norman Osborn create "The Spider-Slayer—Part 1" (Feb. 4), leaving Kingpin to use Smythe's son to continue the legacy in "The Return of the Spider-Slayers—Pt. 2" (Feb. 11). A master special effects artist frames Spidey for his crimes in "The Menace Of Mysterio" (Feb. 18), but our hero survives to face Otto Octavius and rescue Felicia Hardy in "Doctor Octopus: Armed and Dangerous" (Feb. 25).

Word from the inside of FOX is that both Marc Silvestri's *CyberForce* and Bob Liefeld's *Youngblood* cartoons may not be on FOX's fall schedule, but may instead be held for mid-season replacements if chosen.

Two of the final four new *X-Men* episodes of this season will air in February. Iceman has gone bad in "Cold Comfort" (Feb. 4) and his past teammates must hunt him down. What they find is the X-Factor team of Havok, Strong Guy, Quicksilver, Multiple Man, Wolfsbane and Forge. That jam-packed show is followed by reruns of "Out of the Past—Pts I & II" (Feb. 11 & 18), and then Corsair returns and Cyclops learns the truth about his parents in "Orphan's End" (Feb. 25). Production problems have delayed "No Mutant Is An Island" and "Longshot," and FOX isn't clear when they'll appear.

FOX has committed to another eight shows for *X-Men*, in addition to the 65 total episodes they had planned, bringing to a total of 73. The series is likely to air weekdays next fall (with 17 new shows) *and* Saturdays with the additional eight new shows) if plans hold.





The next *X-Men* season will include a two-parter wherein Magneto learns Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch are his children. In addition, Storm will revisit her past in Harlem, Nightcrawler will finally appear and several multipart stories will air. Look for an adaptation of the Claremont-Byrne "Proteus Saga," and a two-part story called "One Man's Worth" wherein the future Sentinels dispatch Fitzroy and Bantam to kill Xavier in the past. This changes the present X-Men, and involves Bishop and his sister Shard, in the war of humanity versus the mutants! Lastly, a four-part story will be the "final" Apocalypse story, plotted in concert with the comic book creative teams!

Coming up on *M.A.N.T.I.S.*, Miles Hawkins tangles with a villain who possesses the power of super-speed in "Fast Forward," (Feb. 17). Then the bugs are back and out to get M.A.N.T.I.S. on "Spider In The Tower" (Feb. 24). The Men in Black have returned and are working with the mysterious UNITY Corporation, while Lt. Maxwell comes under fire from within the police department for her knowledge about M.A.N.T.I.S. After that, only two more episodes are left to be aired, and their airdates are unknown at press time: "Ancestral Evil" and "Ghost In The Ice." Despite what you may read in other magazines, *M.A.N.T.I.S.* has not been picked up for a second season. Given its ratings, it doesn't seem likely that it will be around next fall, but stranger things have happened.

SYNDICATED AND CABLE

Rysher's syndicated *RoboCop* is down for the count. The final rerun, "Trouble In Delta City," will air on March 6. Then, a year and 22 episodes after it premiered, *RoboCop* will go back to the shop. With the lackluster performance of the TV series and the declining film revenues, I predict this will be the last time we see Murphy in action.

Showtime's upcoming *Outer Limits* series will begin airing all-new episodes on March 26. We'll have a preview of the series next issue.

Coming up on the swashbuckling *Highlander*, look for a run of all-new episodes: MacLeod's past catches up to him with the flashback introduction of his deadliest adversary yet—a vengeful Immortal named Kalas—in "Song of the Executioner" (week of Feb. 20-26). The story continues as MacLeod flees to France for a reunion with an old friend, Hugh Fitzcairn (The Who's Roger Daltrey), in "Star-Crossed" (w/o Feb. 27-March 5), followed closely by Kalas. Both MacLeod and Kalas then race to find the oldest Immortal, a man named "Methos" (w/o March 6-12). The rest of March will be all reruns.

Lead actor Kevin Sorbo, plus lots of CGI special effects, combine to make Universal's *The Legendary Journeys Of Hercules* a fun-filled hit in its own one-hour weekly series. Watch for it weekly on your local syndicated station.

Sheridan is missing on an exploratory mission and Ivanova must



take over operations on *Babylon 5* in "All Alone In The Night" (week of Feb. 13-19), leading to increasingly dire tension between the Narns and the Centauri. In "Acts Of Sacrifice" (w/o Feb. 20-26), Sheridan tries to keep the peace between the alliances, while maintaining Babylon 5's neutrality. But will the Minbari, Lumati or Earthforce complicate matters and ignite the sparks of an intergalactic apocalypse? Look for a dangerous new story arc to begin here.

Duckman will also begin all-new episodes of its cranky second season on Saturday, March 11. USA Network promises that there will be tons of guest voices on the series, including some big-name stars.

Sam Kieth's *The Maxx* has been delayed from its premiere on *MTV Oddities*, until March 27. Reruns of Eric Fogel's bizarre *The Head* will appear throughout January. By the way, *Oddities* reruns Saturdays at 3 a.m., Sundays at 9 a.m. and 11:30 p.m.

On the syndicated vampire hit *Forever Knight*, Nick divulges his love for Natalie while searching for a serial killer in "Be My Valentine" (week of Feb. 11-17), and then must save the city's homeless population from an arsonist in "The Fire Inside" (w/o Feb. 18-24). Nick's secret fortune is in peril when his financial investor is murdered, possibly by his own son, in "Blood Money" (w/o Feb 25- March 3).





All-new *Star Trek: Deep Space 9* episodes this month include "Destiny" (Feb. 13), "Prophet Motive"(Feb. 20, directed by *ST: DS9* star Rene Abourjonois) and "Visionary" (Feb. 27). The following three March shows will be reruns.

Star Trek: Voyager zooms through "The Cloud" (Feb. 13), and skims through the "Eye of the Needle" (Feb. 20). Next up is "Ex Post Facto" (Feb. 27), followed by a preemption (March 6), and "Emanations" (March 13). If you thought bad alien hairdos were solely in the domain of *Babylon 5*, take a look at Neelix (Ethan Phillips) Between his bizarre looks and his girlfriend's (Kes, played by Jennifer Lien) Barbie doll '70s flip, the interspacial *Coifs 'R' Us* stylists need a new job.

Look for an *Incredible Hulk* triple feature on the Sci-Fi Channel on Feb. 12, airing the three telefilms *The Incredible Hulk Returns*, *Trial of the Incredible Hulk* and *Death of the Incredible Hulk*.

Also on Sci-Fi, look for *Cliffhanger Playhouse* on March 4, airing four final episodes that left viewers hanging forever, including *The Invaders*, *Time Tunnel*, the new *Dark Shadows* and *Alien Nation*.

On one of my favorite hours, the *Sci-Fi Series Collection*, look for the *X-Files* precursor, *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* (Feb. 1-15). Ernest Borgnine in *Future Cop* (Feb. 16-March 7), and *Probe* (March 8-27).

Having bounced all over the schedule in its first month, USA's one-hour *TekWar* series might only be settled into its Monday night berth for a short while. Rumors of yet another time-or-day change are in the wind. Coming up: a hacker has introduced a computer virus into virtual reality games, turning kids into killers in "Killer Instinct" (Feb 20). Then Jake is taken hostage by felons and must face hellish hallucinations in a cryogenic freezer in "Chill Factor." Other upcoming shows include "Deadline" and "Carlotta's Room."

The highly-stylized *Phantom 2040* has a trio of new shows coming up. The secret of Phantom's identity is in the hands of an old magician friend in "The Magician" (Feb. 11/12), while a star athlete gains computer-enhanced super-powers in "Swifter, Higher, Stronger" (Feb. 18/19). Next, Graft and VainGloria gain access to Sector Zero—and thus the location of the Phantom's lair—in "Lasers In The Jungle" (Feb. 25/26). March will be all reruns



Todd McFarlane is working closely with HBO on a *Spawn* animated one-hour weekly series, while also working with New Line Cinema to develop a live-action film.

BARKER & KING FACE OFF

The year 1995 may well be the year of Clive Barker's takeover of Stephen King's territory in Hollywood. For MGM, Barker directed *Lord Of Illusions*, starring *Quantum Leap's* Scott Bakula as the detective Harry D'Amour. The New York detective follows a crime trail to Los Angeles, where he gets involved in investigating the sudden death of master magician Philip Swann (Kevin J O'Connor) and falls in love with the dead man's wife, Dorothea (new Bond girl Famke Janssen, also of *Model By Day*). Then the computer-generated demons attack! The $9 million Propaganda film is based on characters who appeared in his *Books Of Blood/Cabal* story, *The Last Illusion* and in the novel, *The Great and Secret Show*. Tony Gardner and Bob Keen are among the team that handled the special makeup effects Look for *Lord Of Illusions* on Feb. 17

Barker's got two sequels coming in March. *Candyman: Farewell To The Flesh* has finished production in New Orleans, under the direction of Bill Condon, from a script by Rand Ravich and Mark Kruger. Tony Todd returns as the tragic Daniel Robitaille, an educated black man in the 1890s who is brutally tortured by a white mob. Now, he haunts mirrors as the hook-handed Candyman, surrounded by bees and blood. When Annie Tarrant (Kelly Rowan) explores the history of her family in a desire to find out why the Candyman is haunting them, she finds murder and madness in the past, and in the present, during the Mardi Gras celebration! The subtitle itself—*Farewell To The Flesh*—is the translation for the Latin "Mardi Gras." Gramercy is releasing this second *Candyman* film on March 17.

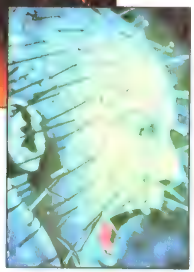
…t up is *Hellraiser 4: Bloodlines*, … from Miramax the following week … March 24! Doug Bradley returns to



the role of Pinhead in a … that finds him stalking a family through the centuries. The film has … self-contained segments: the first is set in …revolutionary France and deals with the creation of the first Lament Configuration, while the second takes place in …modern America and the … takes place in a future space colony. Makeup-genius-turned-director Kevin Yagher helmed this sequel, written by Pete Atkins from an idea by … Valentina Vargas and Bruce … also star.

… Kennedy and Frank … are producing *The Thief of Always*, based on … book. …vana is handling the animation, for October 1995 release. Finally, Barker's *Weaveworld* will … miniseries on Showtime … this year. The massive … has been adapted by Peter Bellwood (*Highlander*) and Dennis Shyrack, and the series will be a co-production between Clive Barker Films, Canada's Atlantis Films and Britain's … Productions.

… Stephen King territory, only a few projects are on the burner. First up is New Line's release of *The Mangler*, in which a steam-cleaning sheet-presser develops a taste for human blood. When police officer John Hunton (Ted Levine of *Silence of the Lambs*) begins to investigate the strange goings-on at the Blue Ribbon Laundry, he finds bizarre deaths, a possessed icebox and a quartet of men whose past has doomed all but one of their daughters. Can he save 16-year-old Sherry Ouelette from the "Mangler" despite the interference from her uncle, a bizarre, deformed cripple named William Gartley (Robert Englund)? Genre meister Tobe Hooper directs. Look for *The Mangler* to debut March 3.



Columbia's trying the high-brow horror route again with King's *Dolores Claiborne*, due out March 24 *Misery* star Kathy Bates returns to King territory as a woman accused of murder, while *Psycho*-star offspring Jennifer Jason Leigh plays her journalist daughter who's forced to confront the demons of her past. Christopher Plummer also stars. Taylor Hackford directed, from a script by Tony Gilroy

On TV, an airplane ride leads to terror in another dimension on *The*



Langoliers, a King miniseries directed by Tom Holland. Dean Stockwell, Mark Lindsay Chapman (*Swamp Thing*) and Bronson Pinchot (Toyman on *Lois & Clark*) are among the stars.



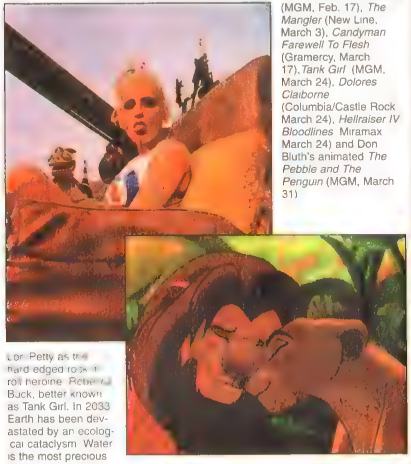


The Laurel Entertainment miniseries airs on ABC in May.

Other King plans are up in the air. MGM is planning a sequel to *Carrie*, to start production later this year. Rafael Moreau (*Hackers*) is writing the screenplay, with Paul Monash producing. King is so happy with the job Mick Garris did on his *The Stand* miniseries, he's giving him the directing job on his next original screenplay for Amblin. That pic is called *Rose Red*, but no word as to its plot.

FEATURE FILMS

Exploding onto screens on March 24 is MGM/UA's *Tank Girl*, starring Lori Petty as the hard-edged rock 'n' roll heroine Rebecca Buck, better known as Tank Girl. In 2033 Earth has been devastated by an ecological cataclysm. Water is the most precious resource, and Tank Girl leads the revolt against the evil Department Of Water.



The *Tank Girl* cast includes Malcolm McDowell as Kesslee, the ruthless head of the Department of Water; Don Harvey as Sergeant Small, Kesslee's right-hand man and Australian actress Naomi Watts as Tank Girl's best friend, Jet Girl. Music star Iggy Pop plays the scaly Rat Face, who's in for a surprise when he hits on Tank Girl in a bar, while Brian Wimmer plays Buck's boyfriend, Richard. Finally, look for rapper Ice-T to join with Jeff Kober, Reg. E Cathey and Scott Coffey as the Rippers, a band of half-man/half-kangaroo mutants who join Tank Girl in her fight!

The title role of *Tank Girl* was originally to go to Emily Lloyd, who left the film because she didn't want to shave her head. Not a great career move, as everyone's expecting *Tank Girl* to be a hit. Rachel Talalay directed the film in New Mexico, Arizona and Los Angeles, from the script by Tedi Sarafian, itself based on the cult comic series by Jamie Hewlett and Alan Martin.

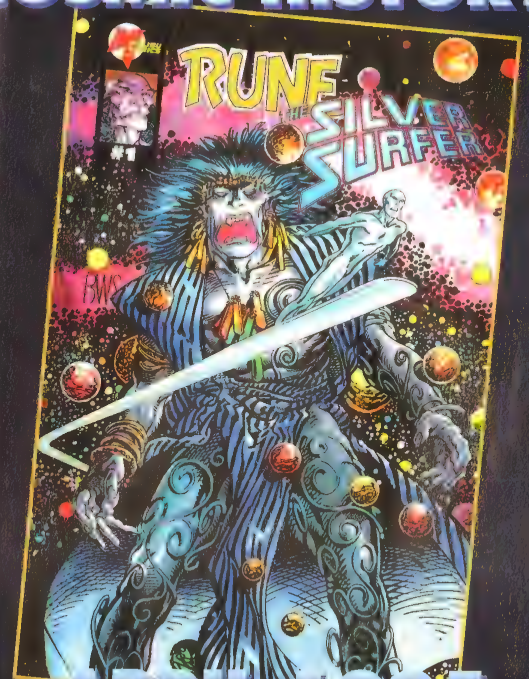
Premiere dates to mark on your calendars: *Lord Of Illusions* (MGM, Feb. 17), *The Mangler* (New Line, March 3), *Candyman Farewell To Flesh* (Gramercy, March 17), *Tank Girl* (MGM, March 24), *Dolores Claiborne* (Columbia/Castle Rock March 24), *Hellraiser IV Bloodlines* Miramax March 24) and Don Bluth's animated *The Pebble and The Penguin* (MGM, March 31).

VIDEO

Disney's set March 3, as the release date for the video of *The Lion King*. Also look for a second direct-to-video sequel to *Aladdin*, and in the veldt, a direct-to-video sequel to *The Lion King* appears to be spawning.

Next month in *Andy Mangels' Hollywood Heroes*, a look into the new *Outer Limits*, plus more exclusive news you can't get anywhere else. We'll see you in 30 days ... here at *Hollywood Heroes!* ▲

COSMIC HISTORY



APRIL 1995

A Malibu/Marvel Flip Book

MARVEL COMICS

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MALIBU COMICS

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ANIME ACTION U.S.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN AND BEYOND

by Roy Ware

EVIL VILLAIN REFORMS JUST IN TIME FOR SUPERHERO FAIR!

KIKAIDA'S OLD FOE IS BACK AND ON HIS OWN!



Toei's Superhero Fair programs started in Japan in 1993. The Fair is a movie festival that includes theatrical versions of the company's current live-action series running on airwaves for that year. These are original episodes that run just slightly longer than the TV episodes. They also include one original feature, which is usually the highlight of the fest.

The 1993 Hero Fair included *Fivestar Team Dairanger* (second season *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* fodder), *Special Search Robot Janperson* (continuing the RoboCop-influenced hero programs), and the all-new hero, *Kamen Rider Zo*. The 1994 Hero Fair saw *Ninja Sentai Kakuranger* (16th in the Super Sentai series), *Blue Swat* and an all-new *Kamen Rider J* (with the return of the incredibly popular Kamen Rider Black villain Shadowmoon, the rogue rider).

Old heroes and villains seem to be enjoying newfound enthusiasm in Japan which made 1995's Hero Fair quite a treat. Fans of the 1972 teleseries *Kikaida* are going to be pleasantly surprised. Out of left field (and the past) comes the main feature with a modern version of Hakaida, Kikaida's main enemy. (We covered this classic action series a few issues back). This time, though, he's a hero! The previous version of the character was created very inexpensively with a cloth suit and what looks like a clear plastic salad bowl over his head. Regardless of his old looks, the character has sustained a strong cult following over the years including toys and model kits. The new version is an incredible improvement with its organic overtones that reminds the viewer of Zeiram. The Japanese fans seem to like dark characters as heroes, myself included. Accompanying Hakaida in the fest will be a big-screen version of the new teleseries *Super Strength Sentai* (Team) *O-Ranger* and the wild *Heavy Armor B-Fighter* (Beetle Fighter). More about those two later in this column.

MORE GOLD! MORE GOLD!

Sunrise's new anime teleseries *Gold Hero Goldran* is the latest addition to its *Transformer*-type series, which has included shows like *Mightgain* and *J-Decker*. This time the story is about three boys (Takuya, Dai and Kasuki) who possess a large variety of robot mecha, which they use to battle anyone who threatens our world. (Mainly that means other robots up to no good.) As of now, the show has only three main robots, but before the end of the year (as always) there will be several more. The first, the main hero Goldran, is a combination of Samurai Robot, Doran and a Gold Dragon Gorgon. To assist Goldran in his battles is Messenger (a locomotive cannon robot) and the Silver Knights: Jet Silver, Star Silver and Drill Silver. They combine to become Silvarion. As repetitive as this series seems, it still has an air of originality in stories from episode to episode and a pleasant soundtrack that sustains the right atmosphere for a kiddie robot series. If you need a break from *Gundam* or *Ranma 1/2*, check out something from this series of shows. It's a cool change.





NEW FOR '95!

As mentioned here before, the flying turtle Gamera returns to the big screen this year in *Gamera—Big Monster Air Decisive Battle*. It's scheduled for a March release.

No more news on the English-language release of *Ultraman Powered*, but rumor has it a new incarnation of the Ultra Hero may be produced in China due to his ever whelming popularity there. Given the kind of action we've been seeing in Chinese films of late, this could be really great. Just imagine Ultraman doing Jackie Chan or Jet Lee-influenced stunts.

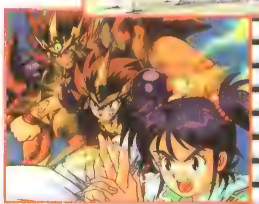
On February 5, Toei Co. released a new live-action teleseries *Heavy Armor B-Fighter* (Beetle Fighter) to replace last year's *Blue Swat*. Their battle armor is distinctly insect-like and pretty cool.

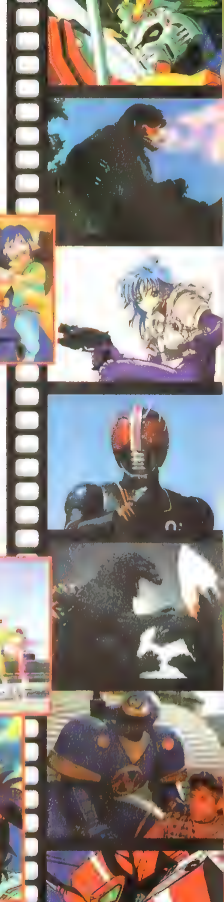
Another Toei release: *Super Strength Sentai O-Ranger* (17th in the *Super Sentai* series) which also starts in February. For those of you who don't know, the Power Rangers were spawned from an earlier Super Sentai series.

In January *Demon God Child Shinki* hit the airwaves. This new anime teleseries has a Jushin Thunder Ryger-type character walking in the footsteps of Go Nagai's fav favorite Devilman.

Speaking of Jushin Thunder Ryger ... the popular Japanese masked wrestler-*cum*-organic monster hero (not unlike the Gyver) OV should be out in Japan right now. Could this start a wave of Japanese wrestler movies that would put Mexican wrestlers Santo and Blue Demon to shame?













Last issue we told you about Jackie Chan's *Drunken Master II*, a direct response to the films of Jet Lee, one of the hottest action stars in Hong Kong cinema. Lee's latest is *Tai Chi Master*, an action-packed picture filled to the brim with wires (to hold all those flying actors) and martial arts mayhem. While it's not as good as Lee's classic *Legend Of Fong Sai Yuk*, we still recommend it for the crazed moves and the fun that Lee brings to his roles. One of our staffers remarked that the martial arts must be computer generated because of the impossibility of some of the moves. Nope, they're just that crazy on those wires. Seek it out!

ANIME VIDEO CHECKLIST

This is a listing of American video releases of Japanese anime for the next few months. We will update this list each month with release dates when available (and all dates are subject to change ... so relax).

A.D. Vision

- ❑ *All Purpose Cultural Cat Girl Nuku Nuku, Volume 1* 60m Subtitled VHS 5/9/95
- ❑ *All Purpose Cultural Cat Girl Nuku Nuku, Volume 2* 60m Subtitled VHS 6/13/95
- ❑ *All Purpose Cultural Cat Girl Nuku Nuku, Volume 3* 60m Subtitled VHS 7/11/95
- ❑ *Kekkou Kamen Vol 2* 55m Subtitled Adult VHS 4/4/95

AnimEigo

- ❑ *Arcadia of My Youth* (Classic Captain Harlock Uncut!) 130m. Subtitled LD 3/29/95
- ❑ *Bubblegum Crisis #5- Moonlight Rambler* 45m Dubbed VHS 2/22/95
- ❑ *Bubblegum Crisis #6-Red Eyes* 47m. Dubbed VHS 2/22/95
- ❑ *Bubblegum Crisis Universe LD set* Dubbed LD 2/22/95
- ❑ *RUPAN III: The Fuma Conspiracy* 73m. Subtitled VHS or LD 2/22/95
- ❑ *RUPAN III: Legend of the Gold of Babylon* 100m Subtitled VHS or LD 3/29/95
- ❑ *Those Obnoxious Aliens* (Lum in English!) 50m Dubbed VHS 3/29/95

Manga Entertainment (all are English language versions)

- ❑ *Appleseed* 70m VHS 2/28/95
- ❑ *Black Magic M-66* 3/95
- ❑ *Devilman #1* 5/95
- ❑ *Devilman #2* 5/95
- ❑ *Dominion II Vol. 1* 4/95
- ❑ *Dominion II Vol. 2* 7/95
- ❑ *Dominion II Vol. 3* 9/95
- ❑ *Giant Robo Vol. 1* 4/95
- ❑ *Giant Robo Vol. 2* 6/95
- ❑ *Giant Robo Vol. 3* 8/95
- ❑ *Giant Robo Vol. 4* 10/95
- ❑ *Macross II (Movie)* 4/95
- ❑ *Macross II CD ROM* 4/95
- ❑ *Macross Plus Vol. 1* 45m VHS 2/28/95
- ❑ *Macross Plus Vol. 2* 5/95
- ❑ *Macross Plus Vol. 3* 8/95
- ❑ *Macross Plus Vol. 4* 10/95
- ❑ *Patlabor 1 (Movie)* 7/95
- ❑ *Orgues 02 Vol. 1* 3/95
- ❑ *Wings Of Honneamise* 6/95

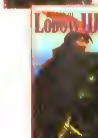
Pioneer Animation

- ❑ *Armitage the 3rd, Part 1 Electro Blood* 45m Subtitled VHS & LD, Dubbed VHS & LD 3/29/95
- ❑ *Kishin Heidan, Volume 3* 60m. Subtitled VHS or LD, Dubbed VHS or LD 3/29/95
- ❑ *Tenchi Muyo: Mihoshi Special* 30m Subtitled VHS & LD, Dubbed VHS & LD 2/28/95

U.S. Manga Corps

- ❑ *Adventure Kid Volumne 2* 40m Subtitled VHS 4/4/95
- ❑ *Detonator Orgun Part 3* 53m. Subtitled VHS 3/7/95
- ❑ *Genocyber Part 1: Birth of Genocyber* 46m Subtitled LD 1/25/95
- ❑ *Iczer 3 Vol. 3* 60m Subtitled VHS 1995
- ❑ *MD Geist* 45m. The cult OVA fave in English VHS 3/7/95
- ❑ *Project A-ko Vs. Battle One: Grey Side* 54m Dubbed VHS
- ❑ *Project A-Ko vs. Battle 2: Blue Side* 49m Dubbed VHS 4/4/95
- ❑ *Record of Lodoss War, Vol. 1* 86m Subtitled & Dubbed VHS 3/7/95
- ❑ *Record of Lodoss War: Vol 2* Subtitled & Dubbed VHS 5.2.95
- ❑ *Record of Lodoss War, Vol. 3* Subtitled & Dubbed VHS 7/11/95
- ❑ *Record of Lodoss War, Vol. 4* Subtitled & Dubbed VHS 9/5/95
- ❑ *Record of Lodoss War, Vol. 5* Subtitled & Dubbed VHS 11/7/95
- ❑ *Record of Lodoss War, Vol. 6* 86m Subtitled & Dubbed VHS 1/17/95
- ❑ *Tokyo Babylon* 52m. Subtitled VHS 4/4/95
- ❑ *Tokyo Babylon* 52m. Dubbed VHS 4/4/95





U.S. Renditions

- ❑ *Ambassador Magma* 30m (Contains episodes 8 & 9) Dubbed VHS 4/19/95

Viz Video

- ❑ *Fatal Fury* 50 m. Dubbed VHS 3/1/95
- ❑ *Ranma 1/2 Anything Goes Martial Arts- "Darling Charlotte"* 52m Dubbed VHS 3/15/95
- ❑ *Ranma 1/2 TV Series #9* 52m Dubbed VHS

HERO INSIDER

IN A FLASH:
... WHAT'S NEXT IN THE BIG M'S SPENDING SPREE? ... EVERYONE LOVES A FEUD ... THE RUDEST MAN IN COMICS GETS EVEN RUDER!? ... WHAT'S THE EXCLUSIVE DEAL? ... WHO'S IN CHARGE OF THE WAREHOUSE?...

[illegible] the word of mouth is that [illegible] Big M [illegible] part of their master plan? *Word* is squirming its way through the world of comics is that they have curtailed their convention attendance big-time. The only places you may be able to get your picture taken with a web slinger may be in New York in February and San Diego. No *word* yet on their mega dyne-maxi-supra-Big M tour, but that may have all just been research for their purchase of a national convention organizer [illegible] block. Maybe [illegible] thought...

Stop me before I say Big M again! Too late ... now that the writing is on the wall (as it is), one wonders who will make sure that all those backdoors get to the right people. What's that when the previous owner takes off to manage games, the new [illegible] other big M is skimping [illegible] assume that [illegible] one else will be taking care of the accounting [illegible]

Rubberville in the cuckoo world of comics, [illegible] with your ol' bad boy pal, MFB has heard those vicious rumors, he still finds it hard to believe that every body with a sizable market share is exploring other ways of getting their comics to you, dear readers, be it buying distributors or signing exclusive distribution deals. Does the [illegible] "[illegible]" mean anything to you [illegible] guess [illegible] market shrink even more. DUH.

Lazy As It Gets Dept.: Let's keep this distribution love fest going, cuz one beady *word* heard is that a certain large distributor is thinking that any comic that sells under 25K ain't worth their time. $10 to the first storeowner who tells a customer, "Sorry, we have [illegible] and 24, but they aren't sold as [illegible] make the only [illegible] getting [illegible] who really do read their comics [illegible] so much for aggressively trying to change the market...

Meanwhile at the Big D ... He's not the brother of Batman (and he once compared comics to grocery items which sounded like soup greens), is now, most of you have heard that he walked in the door with his counsel and declined to spill any beans because one of the distributors was owned by the Big M. Who's he crapping? What [illegible] the sad [illegible] [illegible] of the comic [illegible] to come true, where will [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] why they work in those home offices, then why [illegible]

Reads just seem to be part and parcel of the wacky comics biz. The latest (but it ain't a recent development) the ol' bad boy has heard is between the Cheese and the mat, [illegible] [illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible] that what [illegible] price guide was all about?...

Gotta scoot, kiddies, I'm buying a distributor this afternoon.

-MYSTERY FAN BOY

REVIEWS

Frank "Liz" Kurtz



Currently, Frank is the spotter for the aerial act "The Flying Elvis Costello Lookalike Brothers."

Rob "Oprah" Holly



Rob still isn't convinced that the star of *Star Trek: Voyager* isn't really Katherine Hepburn.

Joe "Barbra" Fielder



Often runs company meetings by saying, "I've asked my good friend King Vitamin to speak today..."

Brian "Marla" Wenberg



Having made great leaps up the evolutionary ladder, Brian is now referred to as "Adequate Lad."

Scott "Vicki!" Grenke



Scott always seems to pop up whenever someone says, "Great Caesar's Ghost!" Science is baffled.

Steve "Lucy" Darnall



Remember those people walking around in the backgrounds of old *Superman* comics? Yep, he's the guy

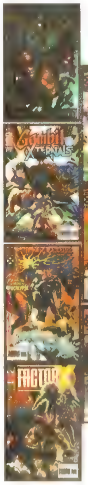
CREATOR PICKS

Many are I and comics that are topping the lists of some industry professionals:

Michael Jan Friedman, writer, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*: "I read the *Justice League* comics, all of them. I read *The Flash*, *Green Lantern*, *The Legion of Superheroes*. They're the books I can read as an adult and get a kick out of. I think those are all very well written books, and they were my favorites as a kid. The other favorites I had as a kid were *Challengers of the Unknown* and *Thor*. I also read the original series *Star Trek* books."

Dave Dorman, artist, DC Master Series card set: "I'm reading a lot of stuff from Dark Horse—*Legends Comics*, *Aliens*, *Predator* and *Martin Washington Goes to War*. I read a lot of Vertigo stuff, but not as much as before. As far as the Marvel books, there is just too much to keep up. I do read *Generation X*."

AGE OF APOCALYPSE



In A Flash: Charles Xavier dies prior to the creation of the X-Men and the Marvel universe takes a turn for the worse, courtesy of the genocide-minded Apocalypse.

Is It Worth It: Back in the '50s, the guys at EC Comics discovered that readers just loved to read "End of the World" stories. They were quick and usually depressing, but were created as ironic statements, messages about the state of humanity or just nuke fear exploitation. Of course, another motivation was that those covers sold

Now, the X-Men titles go one (or nine times) better with the world resting for the moment on the brink of destruction. Of course, to compliment this massive undertaking, we see nine new X-titles, all starting with #1. This time, though, the investment is considerably higher than what an old EC comic cost. These puppies will run you about two to four bucks each and the story will run four issues each

If you're an X-Men fan, then odds are you're enjoying the story with its complicated twists and turns, multiple X-Men and rampant death and destruction. If not, you may still enjoy the story but find yourself somewhat confused by what is going on. For me, the casual reader, I was reminded of a movie with a load of stars all playing their parts in heavy makeup

Some of them you can identify, others you're completely unaware of.

The story is fairly coherent given an undertaking of this size. If this stuff is part of the old continuity, it's nice to get some insight that you couldn't normally force into the regular stories. For longtime Marvel readers there may be questions: When does Apocalypse *really* attack in relation to other events in the Marvel Universe? Where are the Fantastic Four or Doctor Strange or the Avengers or even Galactus? It's always bugged me that the X-Men seem to be a world unto their own where the rest of the Marvel superheroes seem to be second-rate characters.

Ah, well, this world will cease to exist in just a few months anyway (leaving behind nine four-issue anomalies)

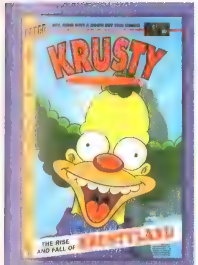
The Good: A good story with clean, good art throughout

The Bad: This stuff can get pretty expensive

The Ugly: If only Marvel would use this much effort on their other characters (like maybe the poor Fantastic Four).

—Frank Kurtz

Publisher:	**Marvel**
Writer/Artist:	**Various**
Cover Price:	**$1.95-$3.95**
Enhancements:	**All in Marvel's new "Deluxe" format.**
Other Notes:	**A series of four-issue miniseries with X-Men Alpha and X-Men Omega book-ending the series.**



KRUSTY COMICS

In A Flash: [illegible]

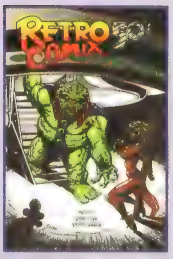
Is It Worth It: [illegible]

The Good: [illegible]

The Bad: [illegible]

The Ugly: [illegible]

—Joe Fielder



RETRO 50'S COMIX

Publisher:	**Edge Publishing**
Issue Reviewed:	**#2**
Writer:	**Various**
Artist:	**Various**
Cover Price:	**$2.95**
Enhancements:	**None**
Other Notes:	**Free Retro POG offer with this issue.**

In A Flash: Anthology of sci-fi stories. The first revolves around an Earth spaceship on the first mission to Mars and their encounter with a time barrier. The second is about three women aboard the spacecraft Hurtent, who are trying to "tag" a comet. The third focuses on a ghoul working in a graveyard. Next, the name says it all, "Leeches of Outer Space." And lastly a story about a fishing trip to Chemco Park.

Is It Worth It: I found only one of the stories to be any good, the rest were kind of boring. The art was pretty on all of them, especially Bret Blevins' cheesecake story ... which was the one I liked. It wasn't great, but it was better than the rest.

The Good: The art by Blevins is the best part. He does great retro sci-fi. I'd like to see more of his work

The Bad: All the stories were kind of ho-hum. They weren't really scary or funny, but they might have been good if they had more space to expand upon.

The Ugly: The art of the "Tales From Chemco Park."

—Brian Wenberg



THE MASK

Publisher:	**Dark Horse**
Issue Reviewed:	**#1**
Writer:	**John Arcudi**
Artists:	**Doug Mahnke, Keith Williams**
Cover Price:	**$2.00**
Enhancements:	**None**
Other Notes:	**Beginning an ongoing monthly Mask series. First one of a five-part story line, "The Mask Strikes Back."**

In A Flash: The Mask's biggest foe, a young rebel punk named Rick, stumbles across the mask and, naturally, puts it on. Ex-Mask Lieutenant Kellaway and his partner are tracking down Walter, unaware of the new Mask's activities. Meanwhile, Walter roams about the city...

Is It Worth It: Hot dog, you bet! I love this series in the same way I used to enjoy Tex Avery or Warner Bros. cartoons. However, unlike those classics, this series blends the cartoon violence with real-life consequences—like how these characters react to guys like Walter or the Mask, who can do anything.

The Good: The original creative team for this book has stayed with the series throughout the run. Their vision is a consistent blend of humor from the Mask and tragedy from his victims.

The Bad: Parents buying this for their kids thinking this is a continuation of that Jim Carrey movie. While no more harmful than a Road Runner cartoon, parents are still looking for someone to blame society on.

The Ugly: Walter, by definition.

—Rob Holly



MY NAME IS HOLOCAUST

Publisher:
Issue Reviewed: #1
Writer:
Artist:
Color:
Cover Price:
Enhancements:
Other Notes:

In A Flash:

Is It Worth It:

The Good:

The Bad:

The Ugly:

—*Rob Holly*



AKA GOLDFISH

Publisher: Caliber Press
Issue Reviewed: Jack
Writer: Brian Michael Bendis
Artist: Brian Michael Bendis
Color: D & W
Cover Price: $3.95
Enhancements: None
Other Notes: Second in A Series Of Stand-Alone One-Shots. Mature Readers?

In A Flash: Goldfish has returned to town after many years and "coerces" Visa to get him into a high-stakes card game

Is It Worth It: Oh yeah.

The Good: It's just a great piece of work. The conversation that runs between the club's owner and the mystery person sitting in her chair is wonderful, and when their identity is revealed—it's a great pay-off. The characterization in this book is *so* much better than *so* many comics. Bendis' use of expression and dialogue fills even incidental characters with life and personality, not to mention the main cast. The dialogue might sometimes remind you of a Quentin Tarantino flick, and some of the plot twists might have you recalling Jim Thompson's work, but it's definitely an original. I never thought a card game could be so suspenseful, especially in comics.

The Bad: You just can't get across someone singing "New York, New York" well in a comic. It's just a major fault of the medium

The Ugly: You actually feel bad when ...

—*Joe Fielder*



GRIFTER

Publisher: Image Comics
Issue Reviewed: #1
Writer: Steven Seagle
Artist: Sean Phillips
Inkers: Jason Alexander, Trey Hutchins, Edwin Rosell
Color: Digital Juniper
Cover Price: $4.95
Enhancements: None
Other Notes: One-shot.

In A Flash: Grifter and his uneasy ally Gallows must join forces to stop their former mentor, who is killing spies left and right in order to corner the espionage market

Is It Worth It: Maybe if you're an Image fan. All the essential Image elements are there: flashy action sequences, borderline profanity and nudity, weapon-toting vixens by the truckload—and Seagle and Norton carry them off well. Almost *too* well, in fact; not to denigrate the creative team—Norton's got the Image-Lee style down, and Seagle continues to impress with his work on *Sandman Mystery Theatre*—but it's disappointing to think that the writer who injects so much vibrant personality into one book would turn around and produce another that's merely competent.

The Good: A refreshing lack of pretension—and no gritted teeth. A couple of genuine jokes don't hurt either.

The Bad: The fact that cliches are handled capably doesn't obscure the fact that they're cliches.

The Ugly: Rob Liefeld Polchow

—*Steve Darnall*



DRUID

Publisher: Marvel Comics
Issue Reviewed: #1
Writer: Warren Ellis
Artist: Terry Dodson
Inker: Rachel Dodson
Color: Digital Juniper
Cover Price: $1.95
Enhancements: None
Other Notes: None

In A Flash: Dr. Elwin Ewing is back on his old [illegible] when he [illegible] of the Druid, [illegible] revenge.

Is It Worth It: [illegible]

The Good: [illegible]

The Bad: [illegible]

The Ugly: [illegible]

—*Frank Kurtz*



OBLIVION

Publisher: Comics
Issue Reviewed: #1
Writer: Jack Herman
Artist: Andy Smartt
Inker: Reed Trela
Color: Wally Lowe
Cover Price: $2.50
Enhancements: None
Other Notes: Six-issue ltd. series due in April.

In A Flash: A new regime rules Oblivion. As Lord Saker deals with various plots and conspiracies against him in his own realm, the Dominion ("Heaven" to us Earthers) gathers intelligence and tries to anticipate his next move. A summit meeting is set between the two realms and the various players in this grand game start their first moves.
Is It Worth It: Yes. Although not perfect, this has many great touches. The science-fiction interpretation of Christianity is very entertaining. This is a very cynical book, with cartloads of subplots and oodles of intrigue. It's not a shy book either; the gore is quite graphic. The summit meeting of the angels is hilarious. Jesus is described as an incompetent operative who botched his mission. There is also a mystery as to who or what Falamak is. Falamak is obviously the equivalent of "God," but with the mortal status of other mythical beings in this book, it is definitely left open to question whether Falamak is just another "Oz." The backstory—very evident but slowly revealed—adds a nice overall touch.
The Good: The historical identity given to "Lord Saker." I'm not telling—read it yourself!
The Bad: The recon team that the Charnel Church assembles is a bit too superheroish.
The Ugly: The view of the stars close to Nirvana. It's a killer.

—*Scott Grenke*



GALL FORCE ETERNAL STORY

Publisher: CPM Comics
Issue Reviewed: #1
Artist: Bruce Lewis
Color: John Ott
Cover Price: $2.75
Enhancements: None
Other Notes: First of a four issue mini-series. Based on the animated video.

In A Flash: The starship Stalleaf is in a war against The Paranoid. They get hurt, and run away. That seems to be about it. Oh, and the crew's all made up of women.

Is It Worth It: Only to the most fanatical manga and anime fans. It has almost no story or plot. There's no introduction to what's happened. What the hell is going on??? It's nothing but mindless action and not even good action at that! The art is alright but nothing to go nuts for. Some of the manga stuff could go over really well in America if they got something that appealed to everybody ... like something with a story. It's not worth spending $2.75 for a book that takes only three minutes to read. You could buy and eat a meal in less time and with less money! Don't get me wrong, I like manga, just not *this* manga.

The Good: It's just short enough

The Bad: Lack of plot and anything worth reading. All four issues combined may equal one story.

The Ugly: If anime nuts get a hold of me

—*Brian, Where's Waldo?*



BATMAN: MITEFALL

Publisher:
Issue Reviewed:
Writer:
Artist:
Color:
Cover Price:
Enhancements:
Other Notes:

In A Flash:

Is It Worth It:

The Good:

The Bad:

The Ugly:

Frank Kurtz



STRAY BULLETS

Publisher: El Capitan
Issue Reviewed: #1
Writer: David Lapham
Artist: David Lapham
Color: D & W
Cover Price: $2.95
Enhancements: None
Other Notes: Inaugural release from Lapham's own company.

In A Flash: "The Look of Love" chronicles the travails of two working-class hitmen—one self-absorbed and simple, the other alert and simple—and the creative ways in which they cover their tracks.

Is It Worth It: Once in a while in this business, someone quite unexpectedly goes off the beaten path and makes it seem like the most natural thing in the world. Paul Chadwick did it with *Concrete*, and former Defiant artist Lapham does it here. The *noir*-ish art will inspire comparisons to *Sin City*, but where Miller borrows from Raymond Chandler, Lapham owes more to the likes of Luis Bunuel, taking tragedy, playing it in a subtle way, and then throwing in a dose of absurdity. Whether or not all this violence *leads* anywhere is debatable (after all, it's only the first issue), but at least it's not the *trivial* violence. To make a comparison: If most comics are Arnold Schwarzengger-violent, *Stray Bullets* is Sam Peckinpah-violent, and more impressive for it. This is a moody, fascinating, darkly comical piece of work.

The Good: The characterizations are solid, yet appropriately ambiguous. I'm quite keen to find out what's what around here.

The Bad: There be an *awful* lot of killin'.

The Ugly: The back seat of Joey and Frank's car by page 19.

—Steve Darnall



GODWHEEL

Publisher: Malibu Comics
Issue Reviewed: #1
Writer: James D. Hudnall
Artist: Frank A. Espinoza, Rubinstein & Espinoza
Color: Various
Cover Price: $2.50
Enhancements: None
Other Notes: Second in a four-part miniseries.

In A Flash: Hardcase, Lord Pumpkin and several others have appeared in Vahdala, where Necromantra tries to talk Argus into letting her kill them. They make off and see the Godwheel. Thor waits in the shadows.

Is It Worth It: Not quite.

The Good: I really like Gary Frank's art, but he seems "unsure" on a few of the characters.

The Bad: There's far too much crammed into this single issue. It's confusing and I came close to just dismissing the whole thing as superhero nonsense. It comes off much like *Crisis* or *Millenium*, where likeable characters take part in the story but all you get from them is a thought balloon in a crowd or a shout during a fight. The reader needs a scorecard to know what's going on. There's one provided in the inside cover—which should work as a warning sign as to what sort of ridiculous time the reader's in for.

The Ugly: I assumed that since this was a #1 issue it'd be the first part of the story. No such luck. It began in #0. This doesn't really bother me too much, it just makes no sense. A four-part miniseries that runs #0-3?

— Joe Fielder



KISS CLASSICS

Publisher:
Issue Reviewed:
Writer:
Artist:
Color:
Cover Price:
Enhancements:
Other Notes:

In A Flash:

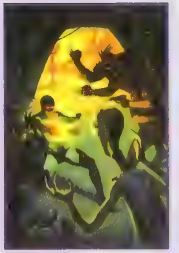
Is It Worth It:

The Good:

The Bad:

The Ugly:

—Don (Private in the Kiss Army) Butler



NEXUS: WAGES OF SIN

Publisher: Dark Horse
Issue Reviewed: #1
Writer: Mike Baron
Artist: Steve Rude
Cover Price: $2.95
Enhancements: None
Other Notes: Part one of a four-issue miniseries

In A Flash: Nexus no longer has the nightmares that lead him to execute mass murderers, he just does it—because it's the only thing he knows. His first job under "new management" is to take out the pirate Osgood Bad, an evil man of the first order.

Is It Worth It: Of course it's worth it—it's Steve Rude and Mike Baron doing *Nexus!* This is a good, solid book and I recommend it. It's great for new readers because it doesn't get so mixed up with continuity that it confuses people; all you need to know is that Nexus hunts down and executes mass murderers. It does have a small recap of events to refresh fans' memories. Also, you don't have to read more issues to get the whole story.

The Good: The artwork is fantastic and the story is first rate. Rude's art is like a mix of Hanna-Barbera and Jack Kirby. If you like art that doesn't confuse you with tons of lines but still has detail, you should check this out.

The Bad: Finding anything bad would be like finding a needle in a haystack.

The Ugly: Mass murder.

—Brian Wendigo



EXTREMES OF VIOLET

Publisher: Black Out Comics
Issue Reviewed: #0
Writer: Bruce Schoonover
Artist: Bell Barros
Inker: Bell Barros
Color: Barry Gregory
Cover Price: $2.95
Enhancements: Yes.
Other Notes: Although not marked, definitely PG-13.

In A Flash: CIA agent and superheroine Violet is working undercover to discover the source of a deadly virus, killing hundreds of people. The "story" progresses through a variety of titillating poses, until the creative team decided to wrap it up and go to a gratuitous "Full Frontal Pinup Assault," that features more titillating poses with no cumbersome story to get in the way.

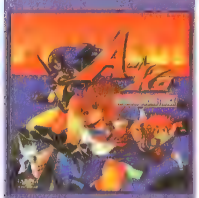
Is It Worth It: Bad Girls are becoming very popular in comics these days. Lady Death, Shi, Vampirella and other such characters are popping up a lot. While I don't condone this unrealistic portrayal of women, I don't object to it either. Fantasy is fantasy, and if there are those out there who want to get their jollies from tripe such as this, so be it. It's a free country. Still, if someone would have taken the time to write a story with some intelligence, the book would at least be palatable. As it is, the story is terrible and the art is marginal.

The Good: Sure is printed on nice paper.

The Bad: DC isn't going to like this "Wonder Woman" reference.

The Ugly: The rash she's gonna get from riding a motorcycle in that outfit.

— Marc Camron

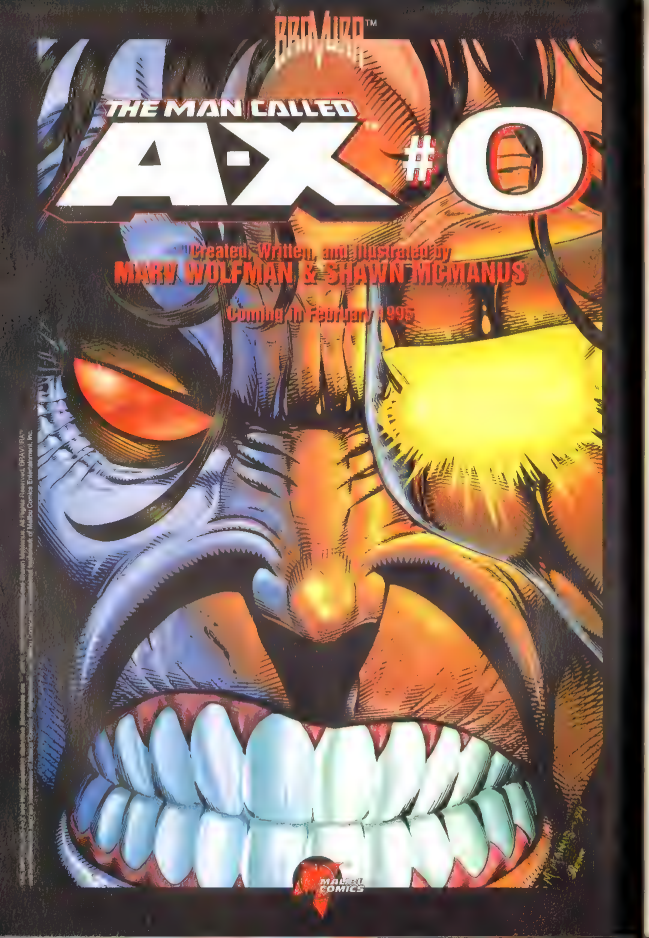


PROJECT A-KO

Publisher: [illegible]
Issue Reviewed: [illegible]
Writer: Joey Cavalieri, Stanley Ma
Artist: [illegible]
Cover Price: $$$
Other Notes: [illegible]
Other Notes: Excellent in the film of the same name.

In A Flash: [illegible] (in English) from the A[illegible] of the comic book.

Is It Worth It: [illegible] change. It does have a very entertaining [illegible] of the [illegible] and 2) How [illegible] "Don't you [illegible] [illegible] a sidekick" to the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]



QUICK SKETCHES

LARRY MARDER

Beans, Beans, Good For The Art...

"I'm still an outsider," admits Larry Marder. "Even though I may look like an insider, I think I still have very much an outsider sensibility." It's unsettling to hear this coming from the executive director of Image Comics and official "Nexus of Comic Book Realities." It's less unsettling to realize it's coming from the creator (and soon publisher) of the "deceptively simple" *Tales of The Beanworld*. Ask Marder what the book's about and you'll get a laugh and a shake of the headhead

"It's not a high concept," he concedes. "It is a world about the beans, cat yronwode, who has been my editor for 10 years, calls it 'an ecological romance.' I always say that it's the adventures of a tribe of beans who think that they live at the center of a perfect universe, but they don't—and all their adventures and misadventures are based on the maintenance of the food chain."

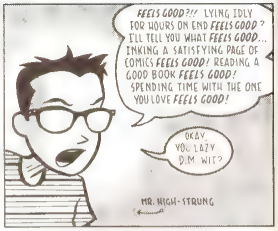


That sounds a little like a species we're all familiar with, and Marder's quick to acknowledge the presence of some pretty heavy themes (even though "I don't want to encourage people to look for it, because it's also coming out of my sensibilities"), but he also insists that "the most important thing about *Beanworld* is that it is a self-contained separate reality. It takes place in a world that has very, very, very few references to our world, and everything that you need to know about the Beanworld is contained in the Beanworld, and that's all you need to know."

Those who *don't* know will get their chance starting in March, when Marder releases the first of a series of trade paperbacks, eventually collecting all 21 Eclipse issues of *Beanworld*. For the time being, it's as close to a regularly scheduled output as Marder's likely to get. "I'm working on a 64-page graphic album, which is one completely self-contained story—three comic books' worth of stuff, really—and I'll do one at the end of [each] year until I'm in a position to go back to being a full-time periodical cartoonist. At this point, I think that I would prefer just to tell a story and not chop this particular story up into three pieces, which means I have to go into three individual splash pages, three resolutions, three hooks and ... a lot of nonsense trying to make a comic book into a periodical. I just want to go bing-bang-boom and tell this particular story from beginning to end."

—Steve Darnall

TOUCHING A *NERVE*



"Young" is not one of the words you'd typically use to describe today's "alternative" creators. Cartoonists under the age of 25 are expected at Extreme or WildStorm, but not necessarily in the self-publishing field. It's impressive to note, then, that Adrian Tomine has been a player in the field since he was 16. For the past four years, Tomine's self-published *Optic Nerve* has garnered acclaim from mainstream publications like *Details*, and a Xeric Grant from Peter Laird. Tomine's proud of his self-published work, but he'll be relieved when Drawn and Quarterly takes over the publishing chores in March. "It was a real burden. I'll be happy when I can spend more time just working on the creative aspect."

"The comic has just kind of gone through an evolution in the last four years," Tomine says. "It started out an almost completely autobiographical book. Then, over time, I started doing stories where I would take a little bit of real-life experience or something someone told me about as a real basic starting point, then I just fictionalized from there. My intent was not so much to be true to the actual incident but to just tell a good story. The stuff I'm doing now is almost completely fictionalized auto-bio, or something like that. I don't disguise it too well."

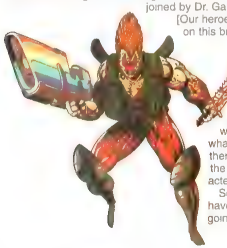
"I'm trying to make stories that anybody can relate to and understand," Tomine explains. "As long as you've lived a normal life, you can read this and understand what it's about." As a 20-year-old English major at Berkeley, Adrian has plenty of examples to study and write about—but, like all autobiographical cartoonists, he has to be cautious when involving his friends. "If I'm using something from someone else's life that I think would be interesting or flattering, then I'll do it pretty obviously and then they'll say, 'That's cool, that's about me!' But if it's something that they wouldn't take too kindly, I'll have to disguise it a lot better and just pray that they don't ask me! Generally, most of my friends aren't so concerned about that. They're just concerned about my state of mind, because I never go out and do anything; I'm just in my room working on the comic book. College is a good fallback. I already have a good job going, but I want to keep up on my schoolwork. I'll be a semi-respectable cartoonist. I don't think I'd ever be respectable without a college degree that I can pin up on the wall. At the immediate time, my goals are just to make a decent living off of it and to work on it full time, and to earn the respect of the other cartoonists that I've admired."

— John Benton

BLOODWULF GETS MANGELED

When Bloodwulf debuted in *Darker Image* #1 almost two years ago, he was quickly—and rightfully—dismissed as a Lobo-clone. The character's been consigned to comic-book limbo since then, but *HERO*'s "Hollywood Heroes" reporter Andy Mangels—, accompanied by artist Daerick Gröss— is about to yank Bloodwulf kicking and screaming back into the spotlight. "I've called him 'the straightest man in the universe,' in a couple of ways. For Bloodwulf, the universe is kind of one big cosmic joke and he's the one who doesn't get it."

Calling on Mangels' vast expertise regarding science-fiction media, *Bloodwulf* will combine the frantic pace of a *Road Runner* cartoon with the immense gag-per-second ratio of the *Naked Gun* movies. "Very quickly he's launched into an adventure by the crash landing of an escape pod that contains two droids. One of the droids is carrying a message from a woman in distress for a strange wizard. The strange woman is not just a princess in distress, it's Bloodwulf's *mother*. Bloodwulf goes off in issue #1 on a search for Ogo Kanafee and a mysterious other person, and gets caught in a battle between the Regime and the giant lizards in Cretassic Park, including one very familiar Toho-like monster. In #2 they're joined by Dr. Gale, an Earth woman who is the doctor on the space brothel Deep Thrust Nine. [Our heroes] discover that an alien parasite that grows inside its hosts has been loosed on this brothel and aliens are overrunning the space station. In the midst of that, our heroic team runs up against Hotblood, which is a team of ... shall we say, erotic superheroes? In issue #3 they are again on the run, and end up on a water planet where some of the cast members are captured and Bloodwulf ends up fighting a giant squid underwater, as well as the cast of every bad '70s TV show you ever watched. Let's just say that at the end of issue #3, things look *really* bad for all but one member of the cast, and that one member is *not* Bloodwulf. #4, of course, is the big wrap-up, which takes place on the Dark Orb, and we find out who leads the Regime, what he has against Bloodwulf and his mother and exactly who is going to rescue them if most of the rescue team has been killed, incapacitated or deactivated. At the end of the series, we have a surprise guest-star by a couple of image characters that you've never seen before!"



Sounds pretty dizzying, doesn't it? That suits Mangels just fine. "Readers will have to think when they read this comic book," Mangels states, "because I'm not going to take them by the hand and lead them through everything."

— John Benton

Q&A

JERRY ORDWAY



How long have you had an affection for Captain Marvel?

It would probably go back to when I was doing *All-Star Squadron* back in the early '80s. I had been exposed to a lot of the 1940s stuff through that book. Roy Thomas had supplied me with copies of a lot of old stories. Surprisingly, I don't recall that many, maybe a couple of *Shazams*. I wound up digging back into my comic collection and found a bunch of the DC giant-size tabloid reprints from the '70s. I just liked the character. I thought he had a really cool costume and was an interesting concept.

Now, with the new Shazam! series, your challenge is to make Cap palatable for contemporary audiences.

I know. I think a lot is made of stuff like this just because a character hasn't been around for a long time. When he was around back in the '40s and '50s he certainly was the Big Red Cheese. People can compare, but Batman is not the same as he was in the '40s and Superman really isn't. There are lot of ways of doing characters.

For that matter, by taking the character back to his roots, it becomes a fresh, new approach to superheroes compared to those we've seen in the last few years.

All I can do is try. I don't know how it's going to be received. All I know is the market is glutted with very angst-ridden and gritty books. Certainly Captain Marvel isn't a gritty book and the character isn't a gritty character.

We've already seen Sivana and Ibac. I presume you'll be bringing more familiar faces into the series.

I've been trying to lace the stuff with old characters. I've been trying very hard to grab aspects that existed back in the '40s. Rather than go to the '70s stuff, I've been trying to look at Captain Marvel year one. I've got stuff on microfilm, and I'm looking at old copies of *Whiz Comics*. The approach is the same as I did with Superman. I didn't feel like I had to follow everything 100 percent, but there are a lot of little stories and a lot of characters who fit into what I had planned. There's a character who's called "Muscles" McGinnis, he was a tough guy in the '40s. He fought Captain Marvel to a standstill, and he was just an ordinary guy. He was a tough guy, like a racketeer. There's something amusing about a story like that. I also thought that that's a character I could fit into continuity. I came up with a clever way as to how he could fight Captain Marvel to a standstill. Basically Captain Marvel kind of fakes it, and "Muscles" is actually an undercover cop who's investigating the rackets. So he kind of gets down and dirty. He's also instrumental in getting Billy back together with Mary. I know we're opening up a whole can of worms here.

I love those goofy old characters. I hate to call them goofy, because I really have a fondness for them, especially Mister Mind.

We've been talking about Mister Mind. To me, when people start saying that these are goofy characters—it's comic books! They're wearing costumes, and they've got super powers. You tell me why a six-foot talking tiger wouldn't fit in when you have animal characters like the Beast in *X-Men*. Obviously, they've done a little differently, but it's all fantasy. The trick is to find a way that fits or a way I can do; say Mister Mind—that works for me, as opposed to accepting everything at face value and saying, "Well, here's this giant worm or this intelligent worm who happens to be the most evil creature in the universe." Like I said, when you look at it on the surface it certainly is silly, but to be honest, most of the comic stuff is based on that same silliness. It's just in the last couple years that things have turned very serious.

I think that we've lost track of comics being sort of absurd yet fun.

A lot of the stuff works in context. Superman was a guy who came from another planet who could fly, had super powers, yet you can do real life stories within that context. You're carefully reminded that this is not the real world when you see a guy who can fly. It's the same with Captain Marvel. The basis is that there's a lot of magic involved and to me magic is kind of fun because it's not a hard science. It's not like I have to sit down and figure how this works exactly. It's magic.

—Frank Kurtz

THE LAST TODD McFARLANE INTERVIEW...



...YOU'LL EVER NEED TO READ!



BY GREG HYLAND

What do you get when you have a ...uggling young cartoonist interview ...ssibly the biggest and most powerful ...e in comics? Hopefully you would ...n interview where you'd laugh, ...d cry and maybe, just maybe, if you ...re lucky, where you might learn ...mething. What did I learn from inter-...ewing Todd McFarlane? I learned that ...truly understand the horror that Todd ...dured being paid millions to draw for ...rvel, you have to be Todd. To under-...nd the problems of the super rich, ...have to be super rich. I also heard ...out as much swearing as you'd hear ...Quentin Tarantino film

KIDS LOVE "BOARD WITH A NAIL"

...re was more talk last year ...ut the Spawn toys than ...Spawn comic. don't you ...k?

... You get to a certain ...nt in our business where ...'ve seen comics, y'know? ...ean I still think that they ... the comics and whatever ... but it's like, it's a new ...ng. I don't do too many ...as over and above the ...wo comic. And there was ...e skepticism whether I ...d deliver the toys. A lot of ...ple thought we weren't ...g to pull it off, but we did ...d we've got the new toys ...g manufactured right now

...ot the list of those ...ve got Chapel and Bad ... and Angela, Commando ...n and Malebolgia ...ch is, I guess, the first ...n' action figure

Yeah. We don't call him that in the advertising, though. "The Lord of the Darkness"; those are the kinds of toy terms that you use. You don't go into Toys 'R' Us and go, "We got this 15-inch hell guy who's actually Satan, Lucifer himself, and we was wondern' if you could put it next to all your other nice, little toys." You hafta kinda give 'em something else.

Is there going to be a "Viking Spawn."

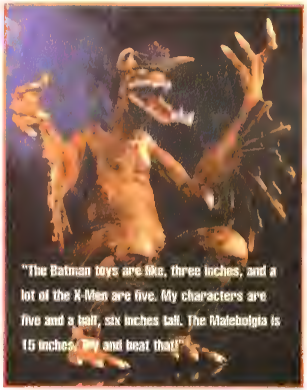
A "Viking Spawn?"

Well, there's apparently going to be a "Viking Batman."

Oh, there is?! If I did one, it would be a bitchin' one. I'd make sure he had big horns and I'd make sure he'd kick your ass. When we're at the bottom of the line and we've done "Football Spawn" and "Baseball Spawn" now we gotta get to "Viking Spawn."

At the Heroes World speech you gave, you had an interesting reason why Spawn's figure is tall. He's bigger, than say, a Batman figure

The Batman toys are like three inches, and a lot of the X-Men are five. My characters are five and a half, six inches tall. The Malebolgia is 15 inches. F—k! Try and beat that! No matter how big their guys are, my guys are and will always look bigger. They've got their big, tall stalky guy, but in the Batman line, he could only be four inches at best. Even my little midgets are four inches tall. My guys always will be taller. There will be a perception that they are bigger and they can kick the shit out of Batman. The Malebolgia, he'll be a hit, although he'll be hard to find. When you make a 15-inch doll who matches and plays with other 15 inchers, its no big deal. But when he's supposed to play with a five-incher, all of a sudden he's a giant!



"The Batman toys are like, three inches, and a lot of the X-Men are five. My characters are five and a half, six inches tall. The Malebolgia is 15 inches. Try and beat that!"

You said the Malebolgia is going to be hard to find. You're going to produce less?

When you make a big guy like that, the molding time is longer than Angela, or something like that. With Malebolgia, I'm actually losing

money. Most people don't make toys if they know they're gonna lose money on them

You've said you're not making money on this line.

No. What I need to do is break even and survive and that will be enough of a f—kin' pain in their belly. "That son of a bitch! How does he do it?" Easy! I'll even give you the answer. I'm not makin' no f—kin money! If you were the boss of Mattel and you guys sat down and said, "Y'know, this year, we don't turn a profit," you turn out much better toys. Then you could say, "Oh the 10 million dollars that we were going to make, you put that back into the toys." I'm putting it back into the toys. There's only going to be one [Malebolgia] in every case. I'm tellin' ya, the stock boys will buy them all. It'll be gone, but because they know it exists, and it does exist. You're not going to be able to miss it when you see it. You'll think they mismarked it 'cause it's the same price as all the little dinky guys. People are going to be on the hunt for the Malebolgia. I'm sure on the secondary market he'll be a 40-, 50-dollar figure in a heartbeat

That's a real obscene market

And there's nothing I can do about that. There's only one thing I can do about that, I could just overproduce to make sure that there is no secondary market But if I overproduce, that's a death call too. I can't have it sit on the shelf. I need it to disappear, but if it disappears, the secondary market will be able to gouge people. It's a life I can't control that much. I just have to do what's good for my business and hope other people will be a little bit more reasonable. I'm putting Malebolgia out there, at a loss, so that these people can steal and put it out there for 50 bucks?

Spawn comes with a board with a nail through it. Why?

I go, "He needs something in his hand! What would he have in his hand?" He's in the alley, I go, "What would he have in his hand? What kind of weapon? Oh, a ... board with a nail through it!" But the new Spawn that's coming out, he comes with f—king bazookas. Not the Commando Spawn. I got an updated version

I'd rather have the board with the nail through it. I was impressed with the board with the nail. I don't think there have ever been toys with "Board With Nail"







People have been lining up for the board with the nail through it

That's the reason I bought it

I find that most of these figures look twice as cool when you put three guns on 'em. You get 'em all done and you go, "God, they're cool!" Then you go and add guns to them and you go, "Aw, that's wicked!" We didn't have one gun in the first six toys

No, but you had a parking meter. Don't knock the board with a nail through it. If more Barbies came with a board with a nail through it, they'd do well.

People say, "Make a big Angela, because she's a real hot babe." I could do it. If she was successful at 11 inches. then. .

It would be successful for the wrong reasons in the hands of the comic fans.

You have to understand the big boys would go, "Okay, Todd's got one Angela figure and its doing pretty good. She's sexy. She's curvy. And we have a whole aisle of Barbie dolls." There'd be 5,000 Angel-Amazon-Warrior outfits for her, and I'd be squashed like a f—kin' ripe tomato. I'd be out of business. I'm going, "Aw! I can't do it" because if it's successful. Barbie will beat me to the punch. But we'll have all our 'S&M Angela' and 'G-String Angela'...

The kids are looking forward to that That and Satan

IMAGE IS AS IMAGE DOES

I've got a quote here from Frank Miller from the Diamond show last year "Todd McFarlane and his pals turned their back on guaranteed wealth, guaranteed fame. They risked all of that on something that had never been tried before—an imprint that represented a group of talent rather than a bankroll. And it was a gamble. When you take chances like that and you pull it off, later it doesn't seem like that. But I am sure Todd and Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld all had long nights, wondering if they'd made the biggest mistakes of their lives " We know how that all turned out. What do you think of what Frank is saying?

The only part I would disagree with is the long nights, because the change that I was making was so that I wouldn't be tossing and turning, and I was, up to that point. So to me, I didn't care if we made a lot of money or sold that many books. because I knew we'd sell



enough. We had a reputation! There was a confidence factor. My confidence was probably the highest out of any of the guys, 'cause I'd go, "F—k! We can do this! We can walk away from this and I survive." In hindsight, people could say, y'know, "They didn't take no chances and they knew they were going to do that." I'm tellin' ya, a couple of those guys at Image, we pulled them kicking and screaming, and these guys, like, the 'Big Boys'. We tried to get some guys, and they just wouldn't come

But you knew the books were going to sell

Right

... there was very little risk

Yeah, I'm not disputing that there is risk! It depends on what your definition of "risk" is. The risk comes in when you take seven guys that you don't know a) are they going to turn out books, b) going to clash and c) we don't know how to do business. Basically, we didn't know what the f—k we were doing in terms of business and then we weren't really the best of pals. You go single you know exactly what you're doing you take partners on, you don't know where the dice are going to fall. The risk came in as to how seven ego-weeks are going to get along and set up shop and somehow not kill each other along the way.

... going to Malibu made it easy, too

Totally, yeah. That's just because we needed a few months. Ultimately, three months into dealing with Malibu, we knew we were, like, gone. It was just soliciting your own comic books, and doing accounting isn't really that big of a deal. For the amount of revenue we were paying them it just didn't equate For a couple of hours of work, here and there, every week, on each book, it didn't equate to what we were paying them

Did you foresee that happening? Leaving Malibu?

Oh, yeah! Before we hired them, we knew! We just basically needed [time] where we could go and get the right people to set up shop and take it over for ourselves Malibu did pretty good by us, because Malibu was pretty much a no-name company up until that point. We just made Scott Rosenberg a millionaire. I don't see him thanking us If he thinks that he would've done it without us then he's fooling himself because he was a no-name company He came in there and took the biggest boys on the block, in terms of sales After we left he was able to keep some of that momentum by creating the Ultraverse or whatever else and eventually selling out to Marvel. If we hadn't spent a day in there would he be acquired by Marvel Comic Books? I'd bet against it

I feel that Image has become a big franchise system. Almost a "Mini-Marvel," with all these spin-offs

But, you can't paint all of us with that brush though

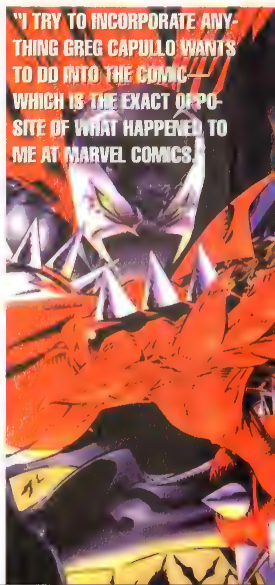
I can paint pretty much all of you! You've got a couple There's a lot of Youngblood *spin-offs. Jim Lee has a big section of books that all tie in to one another*

I think that there is a misperception. From the very beginning we said we never wanted to do anything beyond Marvel We said, "We LOVE Spider-Man! We LOVE X-Men! We LOVE Hulk! We LOVE Captain America!" So we're going to go over here and create a new system that warrants that the creator gets more of his properties and more of the income and more input into the artistic input and some of the merchandising. But we still want to do Spider-Man and the X-Men and the Hulk. I didn't want to quit *Spider-Man* and go do something revolutionary. I want to do *Spider-Man*. I just couldn't do it under that system. So,

I think that there is a bit of a misperception that just because we quit we have to go and redefine comics. We didn't want to redefine comics We wanted to do superhero comic books

Then how does Greg Capullo doing Spawn *differ from you doing* Spider-Man*?*

Good question, bud! When I worked on *Spider-Man*, they didn't report to me on what they did beyond the comic book They didn't ask my input on anything They didn't give a shit about what I did They just wanted me to draw the book. Greg's involved in character design, costume design, the toys, some of the movie end of it, the plot line with what's going on. I try to incorporate anything Greg wants to do into the comic book—which ... is the exact opposite of what happened to me at Marvel Comics. I value Greg Capullo's opinion on everything! The reason I quit is because they didn't give a shit about me, they didn't





I'm seemed like a natural one of the most prominent men at Image talking with the men who produced last year's controversial Kill Image, Clash of the titans or battle of the psychos? You be the judge.

How'd you first get introduced to the Kill Image concept?

Maybe San Diego last year? I said, "Oh, look, I've got my mug on the cover of another magazine." I looked at it and went, 'Oh, cool he only blew my hand off. He likes me." I'm not the dismounter so I'm not calling any shots. I gotta be man enough to stand up and take a few knots. Sometimes it makes people feel good.

You're getting your product out on time now. Last year at this time everyone was pissed, and I did the Kill Image book. Absolutely perfect timing.

That's right. You got in there. I was gonna actually write you a letter and go, "You f—ked up Rob, because you blew off my right hand, and I'm left handed, you didn't do dick to me. You f—ked up. You killed everybody else but of Teddy was still ready and raring with pen in hand goin' full speed for the next issue. I haven't let the snake outta the bag here but I could really wreck your credibility.

It'd be pretty easy.

I've got you over a barrel, I just want you to know that.

At least you're not worried I'm going to kill you like Rob was.

Rob and my wife.

Oh, yeah?

Todd, this is disturbing." An, c'mon, we're comic book people, we're harmless.

respect me. They sit there and go, "We're glad you're making us a boat load of money, but we don't give a f—k about you ultimately. As soon as another kid comes along who can run a little bit faster than you, you're gone!" That's why I quit Marvel Comic Books. But do I treat people differently? Do I have a different system than Marvel? Damn right, I do. That's where the difference comes.

You were worried that you would be replaced? That Marvel wouldn't have loyalty toward you?

Buddy, I come from a very simple stance. If they could f—k Jack Kirby then they will f—k anybody. I am not bigger than Jack Kirby. I don't profess to be, and I will never think that I'm tellin' ya, the day I broke into comic books I knew my days were numbered at the big companies. I'd go, "Todd, you'd better protect your ass," even when I was a schmuck that nobody cared about. I have the same attitude I have had about comic books since day one. I have yet to hear the story where they go, "Y'know, you're a good, loyal guy. We will take care of you. We will make sure your family does well, and that you get a piece of this pie, and that if you get hit by a bus we owe an obligation to you." I have not heard that yet. I guess they took care of Stan Lee, but he was only one half of that puzzle. It was a guy named Jack who was the other half of that puzzle, and somebody got left behind at the train station on that one.

I don't want to sound like I'm defending Marvel but wouldn't you say that there is some sort of economic compensation?

Um...

The fact that you are getting paid a lot of money. That's how Marvel takes care of you.

No. That's the same argument that drives me crazy about why people are pissed off at baseball players! I can honestly tell you that until you've been in that position, you can't understand it. That once you're getting f—ked at a job they can't pile the money high enough for you to accept that job. Any more I don't

matter how much money they give you. Now, when you don't like a job and they pile the money up really high, you'll put up with it a lot longer. You have to just throw your hands up and go, "Y'know, I'm bending over, and they're driving me real deep. And it don't matter how much money they put on the table, they're driving me deep. And I just don't like it any more." That people are buying you with money is just a capitalist society f—kin' cop out! Obviously, you've never been dissatisfied with a job, then you would understand it doesn't matter about money. Then you and I have a philosophical difference. If you tell me, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, Todd, I had a job I didn't like, but it had a 50 percent raise I would have stayed there," then you and I got a philosophical difference. You're a bought man. I could buy your ass tomorrow. You don't give a f—k what your doing. You give a f—k about how much they're giving you to do it.

You said that you want everyone who's working for Marvel and DC to come work for Image.

I said basically everyone who's working for Marvel or DC could be potential people who could work at Image. [We] use Marvel and DC as a training ground. Now that Marvel is beginning to pay better wages and giving these new megadeals to some of their people to try and keep them there. Because of Image comic books, all the companies—DC, Valiant, Malibu—gave better deals to their creative people. So there are people who have no inclination about leaving their company, who don't give a rat's ass about Image comics. They are making more money because of Image comics whether they want to accept it or not.

I guess it boils down to the people who can take what you couldn't take at Marvel.

I'm not saying that if you take it you're less of a person. If anything, I'm saying that I've got a lot of faults myself. I'm not here to tell people not to work at





Marvel or DC. I did it. Hallelujah to anybody who can do it. A guy like John Buscema who can do it for 35 years, bless that man, 'cause he's got something strong in him that I just don't have.

DOING MY OWN STYLE WILL GET ME TO THE TOP OF THE HEAP

I have a quote here from you: "I don't want to draw like everybody else, just let me draw what I want to draw. Why don't you let 10 people draw Spider-Man 10 different ways? I don't see why that's a big problem? They [Marvel and DC] seem to have a big problem with that."

The thing is, when I was saying it, I could see them having a problem with someone wanting to change, let's say, the X-Men at that point, 'cause *X-Men* was the #1-selling book. But when I came on *Spider-Man*, [the book] wasn't really selling worth a darn considering what a character it was. Neither were some of the other books, but they still wanted to keep doing what's not selling. Why don't you want to bring in some guys and go, "Guys, go crazy!" and let's see.

You have people at Marvel who are drawing imitations.

Right now I see Jim Lee and Scott Williams are probably the most imitated people in the business by far. We need the guy who breaks away from that. But it's what they were raised on. You gotta understand, the young 22-year-old kids, that's who their heroes were and they are influenced by their work.

But there's something beyond influence and imitation.

They have to find their niche. They have to go, "Doing Jim Lee doesn't mean I'm going to get rich and famous. Doing my own style will get me to the top of the heap." Some of them are getting frustrated going, "Oh, I got on a 'Mute' book now, and I draw just like Jim Lee and why am I not as big and popular as Jim Lee?" It's because Jim Lee has already been there. My mom could draw *X-Men* and make it sell right now. These young kids think that going to *X-Men* is going to make their career. That's not true. If that were true then why has nobody made a career of *X-Men* so far?

The Kuberts?

Kuberts have done okay, but it's not like they've redefined comics. Why do you want to take the easy way out? To me taking the Mutant books is the easy way out. It's like I go there and I a) do a 'Mute' book, b) it sells a lot, c) I make a lot of money and d) I get a big lineup at the conventions and e) I'm on the *Wizard* Top 10. That's the mentality of a lot of the young kids coming in right now.

But you have a guy like John Cleary on your Boof book, and his art really looks like your art. Where does he fit into all that?

He was just a kid that I met who was a good kid that just had the right attitude and turned out the book. You can't pick out John and say, "Look what you're doing, Todd, you're perpetuating what you just said." Well, I also did *Boof and the Bruise Crew* that Tim Harkins did that was completely different. I didn't factor in that John looked like me or did some imitations of me. You use John as a gauge, then the other book is an inconsistency to me. Did John happen to draw like me? Yeah, whatever. But if that was that big of a deal for me, the *Boof* book is over, why isn't John drawing another book for me so I can perpetuate that style over and over? I hired

It's a gag.

Oh, yeah. Football players do weird stuff. We're just crazy. We need to put in on paper, once it's on paper we're normal people. But then again you don't want people to really know that because it wrecks the whole mystique. A normal guy, awww, that's not fun. You want to think some psychotic is drawing this stuff. "This guy is f—ked up, I hate what's happening to society from this stuff."

Do you catch a lot of flak for the violence in Sparx?

Yeah, you know.

Does it bug you?

F—k, I can't allow people to tell me what to put in my book. Never have, never will. I'm sure you do the same thing. You don't like the product or buy someone else's book. Just because I'm putting out a product that disturbs doesn't mean you have to buy it. Go spend your money on something you do like.

I think the only thing someone could freak about is that it's a violent book marketed to kids.

There is some legitimacy there, but then we'd be getting into a conversation that could go on forever. Just because little Johnny can't take it doesn't mean there aren't a lot of little Johnnies that could. I've gone to plenty of conventions, and I've got the kids with their parents and their dads. I even go, "Do you know what? In these comic books—" I'll go, "Oh, yeah, just good, clean fun." But they are violent. "Ahhh, so what." So I'm sure it offends some people's sensibilities, but I just have to ask would this have bugged me when I was 12 years old? Hahhh. I wonder if this was cool. "That's all it is." If Mom doesn't think it's cool that's outta my control. I can control my sensibility, draw other lines. I don't put the word f—k in there.

That word is all over my books.

You just make your own personal judgments and go to bed at night.

What kind of fans you got? Any crazies?

Yeah, my fans are probably a lot crazier than the average Image fan. But I think my book has a little bit of an edge to it so it appeals to an older crowd. A little bit warmer.



"I'M TELLIN' YA, THE DAY I BROKE INTO COMIC BOOKS, I KNEW MY DAYS WERE NUMBERED AT THE BIG COMPANIES. I GO 'TODD, YOU'D BETTER PROTECT YOUR ASS,' EVEN WHEN I WAS A SCHMUCK THAT NOBODY CARED ABOUT."

him to do some work he did it

He wasn't hired because of his style?

He wasn't hired because of his style. I just thought his style would suit Boof as a single character rather than the group book that has Tim Harkins. Plus, I wanted to give the books two different looks So I had to find a style for each one of them. But that the guy happened to like my artwork? Well, whatever. It's probably why he was lead toward me, because he liked me

I feel that most of the Image books have that "inbred" look about them, like an animation studio, where people all have to draw like one another

I'll agree. I've had that conversation with Rob and Jim, "God, how do you teach these guys to look like you?" and they go, "We don't!" It's just that they have studios right now. Maybe that's what you see as part of a problem Everybody by each other, and because that kind of becomes like the "house style." They love Jim Lee's stuff. That's why they came to work for Jim Lee Why would someone want to come work for me if they thought my stuff sucked, y'know? I'm not saying that's good! I'm saying it's just the way it is

So that guy with the revolutionary style has to really struggle to get out there then?

He's not going to revolutionize anything, he's just going to be the next kind who we are going to think is "hot," 'cause he's not going to do Todd, he's not going to do Rob. I'm talking about a guy who comes on *Captain Amenca* and makes you look at *Captain Amenca* like you've never looked at *Captain Amenca*. It doesn't mean it has to equate in sales, because it takes a long time in coming for people to recognize something is happening.

see a big difference between ler-Man *and* Spawn. *I read somere that you said* Spawn *in five years t look like* Spawn *#1. Which way you think you're heading?*

ichever way the audience wants it to Whichever way I want it to go I ss "tweaking" is more of what I do When I was on *Spider-Man*, everybody pected that "look." But to keep my id into it, after doing 40 issues of *ider-Man*, I was looking for a little hange. I needed a character that vould] give me a bit of a change pawn was the character who allowed to do a little of a change. Plus I uld hand-pick my letterer and colorist, d those two tie into the overall look of whole book. It kind of gave me a fferent look than the *Spider-Man* ok. Where, when Jim Lee came on kept a lot the same and you got a ok that was just a slicker version of *Men*. But there's nothing wrong with because everybody loved the X- e. He chose one path, and I chose other. I ended up maybe looking like hanged my style

hink things got a lot looser, a lot rtoonier

Yeah, probably, because I'm having ore fun with it I don't mind the carton stuff. Some people have a problm with it. I was lucky enough to come before Jim Lee. Jim Lee has been a rse to a lot of people He actually owed people how to draw, you know at I mean? I kind of like had a "style" it it wasn't very authentic. Like, okay ider-Man's anatomy was kind of nky and some of the people in the ok they're kind of cartoony, and I uld get away with that. But basically fter Jim Lee came in, he spoiled it for anybody to do that funny stuff.

IF ONLY I CAN WRITE SOME DOPEY LITTLE STORY

That debate with Peter David didn't really go the way you wanted, did it?

Nope I wasn't looking for a shit kicking

That's obvious. I was in the audience early on, and when you started to take your clothes off, I realized this was going to be something kinda nutty

That's what I was hoping for .

It didn't turn out that way at all

They basically saw the kinds of things that I was going to do and they whispered in my ear that if I do it, then Peter walks. I was like, "F—k. Okay Whatever." I didn't want to be the guy who had to say, "Uh, because of me, Peter David won't be here. You guys have been waiting for this, and now you can lynch me. Thank you." I saw an angry mob, and I saw they wanted a killing. At that point Image comics was the devil, and so I go, "They want a lynching? They want a mob?" I go, "Okay" so after I took off the clothes and they whisper in my ear, I basically clung to my passivist mode and I said, "Go! Go ahead, kick me, burn me, hang me, do whatever you want to do and feel better about it." And a lot of people did. The world was a far brighter place for a lot of people in the audience, there. Peter David gave Toda McFarlane and Image Comics a kick in the butt. It accomplished one thing People saw Peter David in a different light. They already knew I was kook and whatever else, and . . . Peter had the respect of a lot of people, and he lost some of that at that debate. If I accomplished one thing, inadvertently, it was to show Peter David takes his stuff too seriously and he can be pretty mean-spirited



One thing he did do was give you a list of tips on writing. At the time you said you'd look into some of that Did you look into any of that?

Uh . . I don't remember what any of the tips were.

Obviously you didn't look into it too much.

It doesn't mean I didn't do it. I do a lot of stuff without making formal efforts to do it. But I forgot what it was he wanted me to do. Put on better writers or something? I did that. Read some more books. I did that. Put an editor on the book. I did that

Was that before or after you had all the guest writers?

It was after.

Why did you decide on those four? Alan Moore, Neil Gaiman, Frank Miller and especially Dave Sim, who was an unpredictable choice

If you're going to get people to write your book, why not pick the best? To me it was fairly obvious. In my mind, those are good guys. I'm in control of my book so I can pick whoever I want So why not start at the top and let them say, "No" before you go to the bottom. I was fortunate enough that they all said, "Yeah." Why Dave Sim? I like him because he's Canadian and a shit-disturber. It was not much deeper than that. Let's not forget that Dave Sim is a hell of a writer too. His books are brilliant.

You read Cerebus? *Were you reading a lot of what those four writers were doing?*

Not really. It's more of just a feel than anything. Could I say that I follow all their careers? Nah, not really. But I know of them, and I know of their skill level

So in a way, you only got them for their reputation.

Right

You've worked with Frank Miller twice. On Batman/Spawn, *what was your work relationship like? Did he write the script? It didn't read like a script to me*

Yeah, I think we did it Marvel Style.

Which is you drew it then he ... tried ... to fit the dialogue

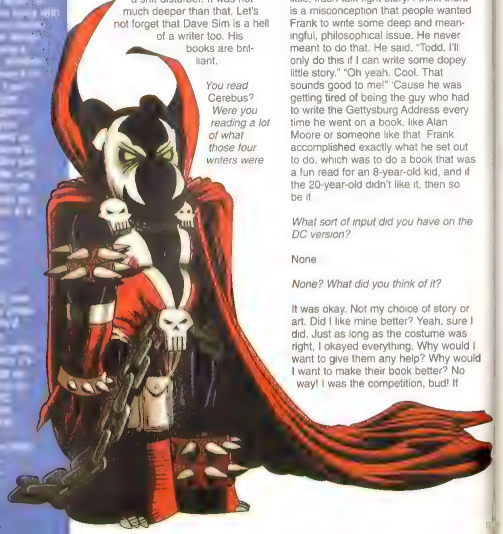
Right. I think that's how we did it. We just did it Marvel Style. In terms of relationship, I guess it depends on what you want out of the book. We accomplished what we wanted out of the book, which was to do some simplistic, little, trash-talk fight story. I think there is a misconception that people wanted Frank to write some deep and meaningful, philosophical issue. He never meant to do that. He said, "Todd, I'll only do this if I can write some dopey little story." "Oh yeah. Cool. That sounds good to me!" 'Cause he was getting tired of being the guy who had to write the Gettysburg Address every time he went on a book, like Alan Moore or someone like that Frank accomplished exactly what he set out to do, which was to do a book that was a fun read for an 8-year-old kid, and if the 20-year-old didn't like it, then so be it

What sort of input did you have on the DC version?

None

None? What did you think of it?

It was okay. Not my choice of story or art. Did I like mine better? Yeah, sure I did. Just as long as the costume was right, I okayed everything. Why would I want to give them any help? Why would I want to make their book better? No way! I was the competition, bud! If



[illegible]s the better project, why would I want to help them? When they sent me everything, I LOVED IT!

SPAWN #19 & 20: I DROVE 'EM NUTS ON THAT!

What was the reasoning behind the Spawn #19 and 20 deal, besides the reason in the comics that "Todd can't resist?" That really drove stores nuts.

Did it? ... Yeah, it did!

Did you get feedback on that?

Oh, yeah. Yeah, I drove 'em nuts on that, but I can honestly tell you that there are a lot of guys running stores that drove me f—kin' nuts as well. The reason behind it, in terms of a business one is that they decided to change the window of returnability from 90 to 30 days, bang! Those two books were caught in that, so I just go, "I'm not going to give those guys the satisfaction. Guys, this is my book. And I don't want anybody telling me how to write and draw my book. And I don't want you to tell me what I can do with my book. If I want to put my book in black-and-white, color, put it upside down, put a #20 on the book, put a #97 on the book, you're not going to tell me what to do." So, it got to the point where it was going to be returnable. Now let's think about this for a second, all the f—kin' retailers that are out there that are still in f—kin' business. Luckily, most of the guys I'm pissed at have gone bankrupt! It is that they have the #1 book in their country, or #2, whatever, it was right up there at the f—kin' top, and they're bitching about the #1 and #2 book that is putting the #1 and #2 amount of money in their pocketbook. And they're sitting there, trying to figure out how to return the best-selling comic book. That makes no sense to me. Figure out ways to return shit stuff that you can't sell! Why would you return the stuff you can sell? You've got two choices, either don't order the books or take them in the order I am giving them to you. The choice is yours. I'm not forcing you to take these two books. If I put out issue #19 and 20, because it's going to take me X-amount of days to finish it, because we just got dumped into 30-day returnability, #21 is going to be returnable, #22 is going to be returnable 23, 24, 25, 26. They are all going to be returnable, unless I stop soliciting for five months. Why would you want to force me from producing the #1 or #2 book in the country? That's idiotic! I made a mistake. Instead of having 10 returnable books of *Spawn*, I found a way to have two returnable books, and I would recollect the other two books Like I promised, and I did, four months later I gave them to you bi-weekly. Like I promised, boom, boom, you got them beauty, everything's good. And the distributors, too: I want to let them know [they] don't control my book. My book is my book. So, ultimately, you guys can say, "We're not going to carry your book, we're not going to sell it, we're not going to do whatever." Fine. That's your prerogative. But, you don't have the right to tell me what to do with my book because if you do that, then I got equal right, equal time, to tell you how to run your shops, and how to run your f—kin distribution I'll bet if I spent more than five minutes in one of those areas, I'd find 20 different ways that I could improve the system. If it hurts the kids, then that's the point that kills me more than anything else. I made plenty of concessions over the years just to appease certain people in the industry to keep the kids happy. Unfortunately, the consumer got caught in this.



You've made some interesting threats about starting your own distributor.

Yup! I started my own company! So what the f—k would be the problem in shipping my own comic books?

Do you see that happening?

Not today. But I don't know who's going to get me mad tomorrow

But with Marvel buying Heroes World ..

Did they do us a favor! If anything were to happen, it makes the other distributors more friendly to us. There's the potential you gotta read between the lines, the potential that they may not be getting Marvel comic books one day. So what do you do? Either a) go out of business or b) get real friendly with the competition. And we happen to be one of the competition

Do you think Marvel will go exclusive?

Yeah. That'll happen. Whether they tell you it won't happen, it'll happen

Exclusive distribution for Image?

We'll move when Marvel moves. Right now Marvel wants to maintain the status quo, so there's no reason to panic I'm in no panic mode. Everyone else seems to be in a bit of a panic. Marvel's not doing anything different right now

Lethargic Lad in: Interview with the Spawn™



Will they? Yeah, they will! I'd bet my life on it! But are they doing it today? Let's not worry about it today.

What do you think of what Marvel has been doing? With Malibu and Heroes World and all the really strange stuff they have been doing in the past 12 months?

I think what they are doing is completely predictable. They went public. They became "Corporate America." They got this big machine that's moving. And then the public stock market, the only thing you can do to keep your sales up and your profit margin up, once something slows down to the left, you gotta gobble to the right. Once that slows down you gobble to the left again and to the north and south. So they are doing exactly what a big business, privately owned company that's gone public has done 10 times over. They've got their own distribution system, I'm going, "Why'd it take them so long?" That doesn't surprise me in the least.

What do you think of their books?

I'm not that impressed by them. But again, I'm sure the same can be said of the Image stuff. To each his own. Is the quality there like it used to be? No, not really. That's one of the reasons why they aren't selling as many books, amongst other reasons.

I'VE BEEN AN ASSHOLE FOREVER

It goes without saying that you are one of the most outspoken people in comics. Is that intentional, or is it just the way it turned out? People want to hear, or people just end up hearing what you have to say?

Anybody who tries to mess with the system is branded a traitor. So I think there are a lot of people who have the same opinions as I do, but they don't have the power to say it or enough people to pay attention. But there's enough people who think like I do. Do I like to have to fight every day of my life on these things? Nah, not really. I'm just a believer in controlling your own destiny, and if that means you've got to f—k the system, then f—k ... I'll f—k the system! Again, it's not just comic books, because they're like, Todd! [You've been] a psycho for the last three years!" I mean, I get that, "He's turned into such an asshole." You want to use that as a definition, then I've been an asshole forever. I can show you report cards and stuff that literally said, "The kid is hyperactive!" What I do in my life is just a natural progression of how I've dealt with things for a lot of years. I just took that into toys. They said I couldn't do my own toys, f—k you! I'll show them I can do my own toys.

So if someone tells you you can't do something, you're going to do it and do it twice as hard. So there is no concentrated effort? You get your fair share of negative press...

Yeah, but that's okay. This isn't about getting negative press. I'd be doing exactly what I'm doing if everyone loved me or everyone hated me. I'm not doing it for the press of it. I'm doing it because I believe in what it is that I'm doing. That Peter David or John Byrne likes me or doesn't like me I don't give a f—k. I get a lot of kids who say a lot of nice stuff, and God bless them. And the people who hate it? Well, whatever I don't expect everyone to like me. Then they'd have to change my name to "God" and not Todd. ▲



Now, we at *HERO* don't like beating a dead horse any more than the next magazine (unless, of course, the horse is the famous Mr. Dead), but Todd and Greg brought up this whole Philadelphia debate thing for one more go-around, and since we've now heard Todd's final word on the subject (or so we hope), we thought it only fair to get a final response from the other party involved. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Peter David:

It is nothing short of amazing to me that a year and a half after the ill-advised ComicFest debate, *HERO* is still obsessing about it. What does not surprise me at all, however, is that Todd still has no grasp of of the simplest concept of "truth."

The truth is that when Todd fast-talked George Perez into moderating the debate, George (who takes debating very seriously) was concerned Todd would try and turn it into a circus. Todd swore to him that such was not the case; that Todd was out to engage in a serious and thoughtful exchange of ideas.

The truth is that, on the day of the debate, George became aware of Todd's plans, including slide shows, music, cheerleaders and costumed characters. George made it clear to Todd that he was furious that Todd had lied to him. Todd told George he intended to proceed with his circus act. George said angrily that he was going to inform me of this, and if I objected, he'd call off the debate.

The truth is that George then went to me, informed me of Todd's intentions, and asked if I wanted the debate halted before it started.

The truth is I shrugged and said, "If I'm not for free expression, who will be? Todd can say or do whatever he wants during his time. I'm here to talk seriously about issues, as Todd claimed he wanted to do. If he wants to screw around instead, I don't care."

The truth is that Todd challenged and insulted my integrity, my veracity and my character, and then made no effort to back up or prove his case, as if such calumnies were trivial. He initiated and organized the debate with one simple goal: to try and lampoon and humiliate me. Nothing else. When it came time to try and support his lies, he was unable to put up and, going on two years later, he has yet to shut up. A successful multimedia millionaire who still can't refrain from dumping on one more freelance writer who he says was "mean" to him.

Todd said if anyone could cite blatant falsehoods of his, he would give a sizeable sum to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund. I suggest he make out the check immediately. The good news, though, is Todd needs no writing tips from me. Clearly, he's mastered fiction. Now if he could just keep it out of interviews...



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ANGER is an ENERGY

FOR EVAN DORKIN, ALL THE WORLD'S A HECTIC PLANET!

by Steve Darnall





"I was thinking about this e other day," Evan Dorkin says. People think my work is just about nger and hatred. There are a lot of facets to what I try to do, but they lways seem to come away from my books thinking, 'Oh, he's such an angry oung man.'"

For comic book readers to pigeonhole or dismiss Evan Dorkin because e's such an angry young man" probably says more about comic book readers than it does about Evan. It's obvious he doesn't suffer fools gladly (any comic fans who saw his "Eltingville Comic-Book Science-Fiction-Fantasy-Horror and Role-Playing Club" in *Instant Piano* can attest to that), but he's also displayed a genuine affection for junk culture, both in his whacked-out space opera *Pirate Corps$* (recently brought down to Earth, in more ways than one, as *Hectic Planet*) and the delightful "Life's Great Rewards." Besides, James Thurber and George Bernard Shaw didn't suffer fools gladly either, and nobody calls *them* angry young men.

On the other hand, this is the man who put Right-To-Lifers, talk-show experts," bass-boomin' car radio goons and Zima into a strip called "They Make Me Sick!" And, of course, there's Milk & Cheese, those thick-browed, self-proclaimed dairy products gone bad, whose drunken escapades have led to vicious, hilarious attacks on stand-up comics, street performers and body piercers that make the Grand Guignol - like an episode of *Full House*. (Come to think of it, it shouldn't be long before Bob Saget gets a dairy-inflicted baseball bat to the head; after all, these days you can see *Milk & Cheese* T-shirts on *Roseanne*.)

"I'm not so much ranting," he offers, "as I'm lamenting the fact that I think everything in society has just broken down. I mean, it's nice that people aren't dying of things they used to die of, it's nice that you can get on a computer and talk to somebody in Japan ... but at the same time, we can't talk about population control without people flipping. What I try to do in my books is show that there's a good feeling in fandom, in being a music fan, in going to clubs, in hanging out with your friends and blowing a whole day watching television. There's a good feeling about getting together for a poker game with your friends. Maybe not much was accomplished [during] that five-hour period of your life, but you really do need to connect with people, and I think one of the biggest things that comics fandom fails to do is *connect* with people. It tends to argue with people, it tends to brag to people ... and it really should just be about enjoyment and information.

"I don't feel like I'm part of the comics community because I feel sort of outside it all," he continues. "I'm not a Fantagraphics guy, I'm not an underground guy, I'm not a fantasy artist, I'm not a guy who does gaming. I've kind of bounced all over the place ... so it's hard to pin me down other than 'The *Milk & Cheese* guy who's pissed off all the time.' I really do lampoon the comics industry, I really do satirize the music industry, I really make fun of fan culture and geek culture and youth culture and pop cultures, [but] I show the good things about them too."

"I'M NOT SO MUCH RANTING AS I'M LAMENTING THE FACT THAT I THINK EVERYTHING IN SOCIETY HAS JUST BROKEN DOWN."



Dorkin's most enduring projects to date have been *Pirate Corp$* (known these days as *Hectic Planet*, for reasons we'll explain later) and *Milk & Cheese*—which probably best describes his yin-yang relationship with pop culture. The roots of *Pirate Corp$* go back almost a decade, to the days when Dorkin's professional resume didn't go much further than an issue of Now's *Ghostbusters* comic (which he describes as "a really awful working experience," although it did allow him, indirectly, to meet Will Eisner), and to an age when "I thought that I still wanted to be a regular mainstream superhero artist. *[Pirate Corp$]* was a story about a bunch of guys who were going to try to steal the Ultimate Nullifier to help save this planet ... it was just a long, drawn-out bunch of comical villains. Eventually I started drawing them going to punk shows and doing stupid stuff and they became a little more humanized."

When *P. C.* hit the streets in 1987, it had settled into "a mix of new wave, punk, *Star Wars* and *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*. I still had a lot of genre stuff in my system, and I still do. I mean, I like a lot of good junk.

"Somewhere along the way I lost *Star Wars* and lost *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, and now it's just a bunch of weirdos sitting around drinking beer."

Evan's understating here: The "weirdos" include pork-pie-hat-wearing aliens with no eyes, psychotic hockey players and the adorable man-child known as Fibby. The book, meanwhile—originally the saga of the crew of a broken-down spaceship—has chucked most of its interstellar trappings. (Although some of them, like the mile-long supermarket and the trailer park full of broken-down spaceships, still litter the landscape.) As Dorkin lost most of the sci-fi trappings, he found himself losing the name of the book as well.

"I was hearing enough bad reaction to the title from people who went, 'You know, I really liked the book, but I was resistant to picking it up because it sounded like space pirates,' and I can't blame them. It sounds like a regular genre book, and even though there are genre backgrounds and trappings to it, the book is not about that anymore."

So, *Pirate Corp$* was out, and *Hectic Planet* was in. "I like the angle of hyperrealism," he notes, "overcrowded conditions and everything. There's more of everything. Life is even more hectic, technology is more of a presence, people are even more stupid. It's a way of not writing the overwhelming, depressing 'macaroni and cheese and the heat's off' stories which I think are all the industry

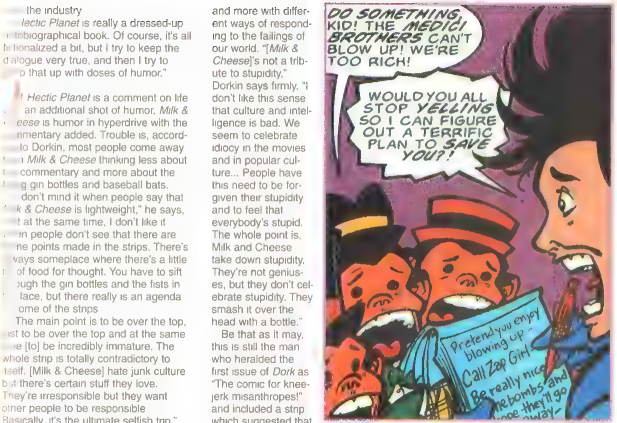
Hectic Planet is really a dressed-up autobiographical book. Of course, it's all fictionalized a bit, but I try to keep the dialogue very true, and then I try to top that up with doses of humor."

If *Hectic Planet* is a comment on life with an additional shot of humor, *Milk & Cheese* is humor in hyperdrive with the commentary added. Trouble is, according to Dorkin, most people come away from *Milk & Cheese* thinking less about the commentary and more about the flying gin bottles and baseball bats.

"I don't mind it when people say that *Milk & Cheese* is lightweight," he says, "but at the same time, I don't like it when people don't see that there are some points made in the strips. There's always someplace where there's a little bit of food for thought. You have to sift through the gin bottles and the fists in the face, but there really is an agenda in some of the strips.

The main point is to be over the top, but to be over the top and at the same time [to] be incredibly immature. The whole strip is totally contradictory to itself. [Milk & Cheese] hate junk culture but there's certain stuff they love. They're irresponsible but they want other people to be responsible. Basically, it's the ultimate selfish trip."

It might be suggested that *Milk & Cheese*, like *Hectic Planet* (and to a certain extent, Dorkin's odds and sods book *Dork* and the anthology *Instant Piano*) has less to do with selfishness and more with different ways of responding to the failings of our world. "*[Milk & Cheese]*'s not a tribute to stupidity," Dorkin says firmly. "I don't like this sense that culture and intelligence is bad. We seem to celebrate idiocy in the movies and in popular culture... People have this need to be forgiven their stupidity and to feel that everybody's stupid. The whole point is, Milk and Cheese take down stupidity. They're not geniuses, but they don't celebrate stupidity. They smash it over the head with a bottle."



MISSION WITH THE KID: KID BLASTOFF FROM DORKIN'S STRIP IN *DISNEY ADVENTURES*. NOTE THE EVER-PRESENT MONKEYS.

Be that as it may, this is still the man who heralded the first issue of *Dork* as "The comic for knee-jerk misanthropes!" and included a strip which suggested that if he had three wishes, he'd kill everybody, then he'd bring them back to let them know what happened and then kill 'em again. Now, we're not trying to imply that Dorkin's fulfilling his fantasies on paper (or if he is, at least his acidic sense of humor provides something of a buffer), but if he's not *angry* over the stupidity in this world, then what is he?



"I'm *frustrated* by a lot of things," he admits. "I think everyone on Earth has a lot to be frustrated about, and ... it does come out in my work naturally. What I try to do, though, is to put a balance and a little bit of hope, a little bit of heart into my work, which I think people seem to overlook."

It's not the only thing they overlook, one suspects: *Milk & Cheese* is his most popular ongoing book, but for some fans—and, incredulously enough, some interviewers—it's the *only* book. That's sort of like interviewing George Harrison and asking, "So—what've you been up to since the Beatles broke up?"

"It bugs me," he admits, "but at the same time, I don't have a lot about it. I'm not like one of those bands that gets up there and gets really sick of hearing people yell out the first single. What can you do? I mean, people see what they want to see. What you can do is try to turn their attention toward your other projects.

"If a guy like David Byrne [and] annoyed that everybody just wants to hear the Talking Heads, he should be happy that he was able to put out a bunch of solo albums that nobody cared about. If people want to talk about *Milk & Cheese*, who the hell am I to argue? It's not a book I'm going to live with my whole life. It's a book that has a finite timespan. There's only so long you can do a strip like this before it turns into a small-press version of *Cathy*, you know?

"I don't mind giving people what they want," he continues, "as long as I'm happy doing it. I've got a lot of irons in the fire. I'm usually working on six things at once. I know where they fit into my scheme of things, and I enjoy *Milk & Cheese*. If I didn't enjoy it you would stop seeing it. It's not a cash cow; it's not even a cash heifer, really.

"I plan on doing *Hectic Planet* [and] *Dork* for a long time, because it's just



what I do. Why should I be upset over something that's brought me attention, gotten me some work and brought me some enjoyment?"

That part about *Milk & Cheese* getting more work for Dorkin should not be taken lightly. Dorkin's taken on a handful of higher-profile assignments over the last half-dozen years, including scripting *Predator: Bad Blood* for Dark Horse, drawing and co-plotting (with Slave Labor publisher and longtime friend Dan Vado) the brilliant "Return of the O Squad," for DC's most recent *Justice League Annual*, and, perhaps most amazing of all, writing and drawing Marvel's short-lived *Bill & Ted's Excellent Comic Book*. At first glance that last assignment sounded like high irony indeed. Here was the guy who hated mainstream comics, working for the mainstream publisher of all



and to top it off, he was chronicling the adventures of the amazingly stupid Bill & Ted—this from a man loathe to "celebrate stupidity." Sounds like one of those "take the money and run" jobs, doesn't it?

Guess again. "I enjoyed the hell out of it," he exclaims. "Originally I was doing it because, first of all, I had no money. The phone does not ring off the hook here for jobs even now, but back then it was like, *dead* phone, you know? If I got a wrong number I'd keep them on the line just for company."

Dorkin may have thought he was taking on a lemon—after all, this was a book being done to capitalize on a not-too-successful sequel, and he'd only planned to stay for four issues—but it wasn't long before he was making lemonade. Using Jay Ward's classic *Bullwinkle* as a spiritual guide, he was able to make jokes for adults and jokes for kids." One of the most delightful of those came when Death—who'd lost a massive amount of money to B & T at Monopoly—took a job drawing the boys' favorite comic book, *Major Violence*. ("I looked at your comic collection and figured, 'Anybody can do this!'")

"I got to put a lot of band references in there," Dorkin recalls. "and I got to do a book for people who don't collect comics based on the popularity of the creator or because of collectibility. I got to do a comic for kids who read it and had a good time with it and that was it. They didn't know who did it, they didn't care; they just wanted to read the stories.

"I really enjoyed the *Bill & Ted's* book I kind of miss it in a way. The thing is, it wasn't a step back. It was a way of teaching me to turn in work in a professional manner. It forced me to come up with ideas and characters."

More importantly, "It kept me drawing! Each job teaches you to draw something different and the fact is that I needed the practice. I don't come to art naturally. I don't *enjoy* drawing."

What Dorkin's saying is that he, like *Life In Hell/Simpsons* creator Matt Groening, is a writer who draws, not the other way around. "I think that's the way it is. I drew okay in school and just figured I was an artist, but I always wrote my own comics, and now I'm making most of my money writing."

There are probably readers out there who would be shocked at the notion that such an independent-minded fellow would "stoop so low" as to work for the likes of big companies like Marvel. For Dorkin, the decision involves an honor of a different sort.

I don't believe that all publishers and creators are virtuous," he offers. "I don't believe that there is inherently a better ethical system in the alternative press than in the big-time press. In fact, the only people who have ripped me off or treated me like garbage in this industry so far have been small press people or small press independent publishers. One thing about a corporation: At least you can bet they will come through with certain things they promised you. The thing is, they won't promise you much."

At the same time, a few people are promising him enough, to the point where this year he's been one of Dorkin's busiest. *Disney Adventures* editor Heidi MacDonald convinced him to do a strip where he would retain ownership of the characters (similar to the deal Jeff Smith worked out when he did a *Bone* story for *DA*). The result was the charming *Kid Blastoff*, the story of the newest—and perhaps the most useless—hero to travail the cosmos.

"I try to do kid's stuff that's not condescending to kids," he explains, "that an adult can read and go, 'That was enjoyable. It wasn't about AIDS or Bosnia or welfare or anything, but it was enjoyable and it didn't make me feel stupid.' The *Bullwinkle* effect."

Of course, one look at Kid Blastoff makes Bullwinkle J. Moose look like Albert Einstein. The Kid himself is, in Dorkin's words, "an inept moron," surrounded by a villain (Dr. Hugo Boom) whose Bomb Squad is even stupider than the Kid himself, a fan club that consists of one member (who only joined for the free snacks— "Just another dig at comics fans," Dorkin admits), three monkey managers (literally) and a girlfriend/mechanic who ends up saving the Kid's bacon time after time without his even knowing it.

The monkeys—and the clever, resourceful female—are fast becoming Dorkin hallmarks. "It's funny, [but] the female characters in my books always tend to be a little more centrally balanced and intelligent than the men. I tried to write a strong female character in *Predator: Bad Blood* who didn't run around saying, 'I'm a strong female character.' The portrayal of women in comics is so awful. We are always informed that boys won't read girls' strips, so no one will do them. So ... I made the girl the smartest, strongest character in the book."

Okay, but what about the infatuation with monkeys? "Monkeys are people without any shame," he says gleefully. "They run around naked and throw their crap at you. Come on, look at a monkey and tell me that doesn't brighten your day up. I wish we could get more apes into the industry. I think production values would go up, I think scripts would be more solid, I think artwork would be more varied and interesting. I think we would have some striking effects in the ink and coloring areas. Chimps would make much better decisions than most of the people in the industry. I know they could run a comic store better. It would be cleaner, for one thing..."

In case you haven't guessed, you shouldn't confuse Dorkin's impatience for the comic book *business* with impatience for the comic book *medium*. He's still hard at work on his own three books, and he's writing an upcoming *Mask* story for Dark Horse called "The Hunt For Green October." ("It's a Frank Capra meets Tsui Hark story. I'm looking for an old Hollywood-meets-Hong Kong cinema line.") At the same time, don't assume Dorkin's recently acquired high-profile has relaxed his impatience with the business.

"Let me sort of balance it a little. I think that comics are great, but the industry is not great. I think the potential is amazing, and I think it's constantly subverted. I think people really have to care a little more about the hobby and about their entertainment. I mean, comics is the only industry where you can really hook up with the creators at the conventions and on the computer and in the mail. You really have access to things, and people don't choose to take this access seriously, they just tend to argue about costumes and powers and *Lois & Clark* and ... *nonsense*, you know?

"Comics are seen as a step up, to get out of some place," he adds, his voice turning a little sorrowful. "It's a shame. I'm starting to get some work outside of comics, but I would really like to stay in comics. It's all I do."

The biggest of Evan's "outside" assignments to date came from the folks at Hanna-Barbera, who asked him and his longtime girlfriend Sarah (*Action Girl*) Dyer to script an episode of *Space Ghost: Coast To Coast* (currently airing on the Cartoon Network). Somebody gave the executive producer a copy of *Milk & Cheese*," he recalls, "[and] he did something that most people don't do ... He said, 'I like this, I think this person can write, I think I'll hire this person.' That's all."

More importantly for Dorkin and Dyer, it meant reaching their largest audience ever. Dorkin admits he's "afraid to fail," and he knew that more folks than ever had their eye on that banana peel.

Well, I was nervous," he admits. "Whenever I do anything for real, for money, I'm a nervous wreck. I'm afraid to write something and it won't be dramatic or it won't be funny, or if I draw something, it won't look like what it's supposed to look like. I have a real anxiety about not giving somebody their money's worth, whether it's a personal project or a commercial project.

"I think this is why my books are so over-detailed, and possibly over-written," he adds, "because I have a real problem with holding back. I'm always afraid that if I do what is perceived as a minimal amount of work, it'll be seen as cheating, which is why I need to take a year off and just perfect my craft. It won't happen."

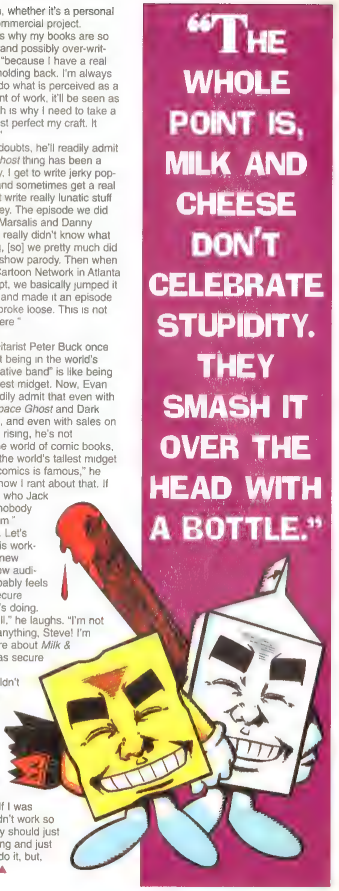
Despite his doubts, he'll readily admit "The *Space Ghost* thing has been a blast. Basically, I get to write jerky pop-culture jokes and sometimes get a real dig in, and just write really lunatic stuff for better money. The episode we did with Branford Marsalis and Danny Bonaduce, we really didn't know what we were doing, [so] we pretty much did a straight talk-show parody. Then when I went to the Cartoon Network in Atlanta to edit the script, we basically jumped it up even more and made it an episode where all hell broke loose. This is not Oscar Wilde here."

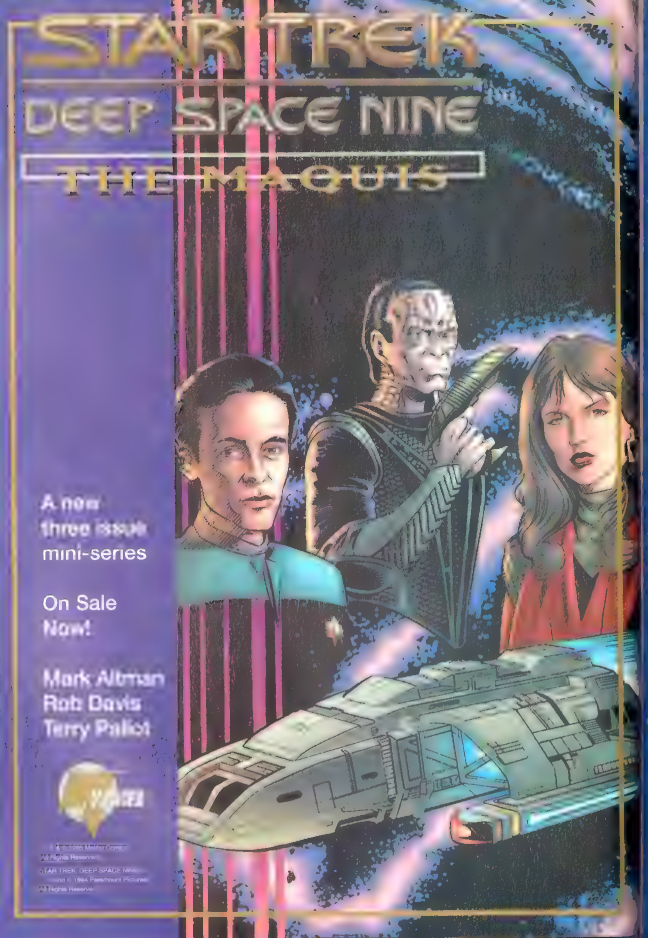
R.E.M. guitarist Peter Buck once suggested that being in the world's biggest "alternative band" is like being the world's tallest midget. Now, Evan Dorkin will readily admit that even with his work for *Space Ghost* and Dark Horse and DC, and even with sales on his own books rising, he's not "famous." In the world of comic books, he's not even the world's tallest midget.

"Nobody in comics is famous," he insists. "You know I rant about that. If nobody knows who Jack Kirby is, then nobody knows who I am."

Fair enough. Let's just say with his workload reaching new heights and new audiences, he probably feels a little more secure about what he's doing.

"No, not at all," he laughs. "I'm not secure about anything, Steve! I'm not even secure about *Milk & Cheese*. If I was secure about *Milk & Cheese*, I wouldn't keep breaking my ass on the pages. I would just churn out crap. You know what I mean. I'm not secure about anything I do. If I was secure, I wouldn't work so hard. I probably should just stick to one thing and just keep trying to do it, but, you know..." ▲





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Raising Ellison

IN THE FIRST OF A THREE-PART INTERVIEW, HARLAN ELLISON CUTS LOOSE ABOUT TODAY'S SUPERHEROES, HIS RETURN TO COMICS AND HOW DUMB MOST OF THESE QUESTIONS ARE

BY MAGGIE THOMPSON



"Only to someone mired in the blandest, most conventional life of mundane weariness would I seem to be an exotic or strange person," Harlan Ellison says from his Los Angeles home. "The reality, flensed of the urban mythology only a country bumpkin would believe, is that I am a hard-working 60-year-old writer who lives in a 4,300-square-foot house with a quarter of a million books, lots of good art and Lalique glass, terrific music and this absolutely wonderful wife—as well as a lifelong collection of comic books that some people would envy and kill for. No bizarro stuff, no drugs, no computers, no arcane or weirdo-freako habits. Just Susan and me and the typewriters.

"So I must be doing something right."

So what would that something right be?

"It is only this: Though I spend a portion of each day barefoot in the land of imagination, I have a very firm grasp on pragmatic reality."

He doesn't believe in flying saucers. Or, he added, assassination conspiracy theories. Or astrology, gods and demons, angels and Atlantis, discoveries of Noah's ark or Loch Ness monsters. He believes, however, in True Love, ethical behavior, and personal courage.

"That's what makes a person rational," he says. "You know the difference between reality and fantasy."

What a thing to say, from the award-winning iconoclast who wrote "Demon with a Glass Hand" for *The Outer Limits*, the also-award-winning "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream"—and just made a quarter of a million dollars when MGM bought his recent *Mefisto in Onyx* for a major motion picture. Ellison as a quiet homebody? How many people would accept that?

Perhaps not Warrior Publications Assistant Publisher Marc Camron. Camron had asked me to question Harlan on a number of topics during my visit to Ellison Wonderland. "You have been around for quite a while, and have, therefore, built up a distinct image. Do you ever feel trapped by the image you created? Is it ever hard for Harlan to be Harlan?"

"No, you silly goose," he said, addressing Camron through me. "As Kurt Vonnegut said in *Cat's Cradle*, 'If you wear the mask long enough, it ain't a mask any longer. It's what you are.'

"Is it hard for Harlan to be Harlan? Absolutely not! I'm me all the time; that's the great joy in my life; and that's why I'm responsible for everything that I do—that's why I'm able to say I'm responsible. Because I'm not playing at being me. There's no public image Ask my poor, long-suffering wife.



She'll tell you."

Susan, is there a public image of Harlan?

She smiled serenely. "It's all the same thing, I'm afraid," and the three of us laughed.

Harlan continued, "When you see me on the lecture platform, that's exactly the way I am. Well, you've seen me here in the house: There's no difference."

"And you've known me more years than Susan has," he suddenly recalled.

I acknowledged it. "Yes, since 1955."

"1955. Have I changed any?"

I was about to launch into a discussion of how he'd always been a loyal friend, an inventive creator and even kindly to children, for goodness' sake but he hurried on to interject, "I mean I've gotten to be a nicer person because of Susan."

It's true, but he was pretty nice before.

We needed to get back to the interrogation. Camron's next question: "Give us one word to describe each of these industry pros—remember, only one word."

Harlan interrupted.

"First of all, I reject the order to do it in one word. Who the hell is Camron to tell me I can only use one word, like some Letterman Show pet trick?

"I think I can do it in two words, but I might even take five. But do not set your artificial standards on me; I will not have them. I'm talking to you—to the piper who called this tune—I say: Poo on you. And poo on the snake you slithered in on!"

We laughed, and I began the list.

Jim Shooter

"Shy, unassuming."

Todd McFarlane

"Talented and immature."

Peter David

"Talented and mature.'

Dave Dorman

"Talented."

Gene Roddenberry

"Dead."

Alan Moore

"Living and talented; weird."

Steve Geppi

'Galactus.

Paul Levitz

'Competent.'

Jack Kirby

Harlan, who had been snapping off responses in a rapid-fire, virtual stream-of-consciousness, paused and smiled reflectively before he answered

"Sweet."

Stan Lee

'Nice guy.'

Harvey Kurtzman

'Talented and dead."

Gary Groth: "Untalented and not dead.'

Which of The Three Stooges was your favorite?

"I despise The Three Stooges," Harlan snapped. "I would not voluntarily watch *The Three Stooges*.

"I think this myth about the glory and humor of The Three Stooges was started by brain-dead people who wish to make us brain-dead as well. I have never understood the appeal of three buffoons poking each other in the eye. As funny as I find The Marx Brothers — and can laugh for days and weeks at them—I did not like The Three Stooges. hated them when I was stuck in a movie theater when I was a child. If a *Three Stooges* comedy came on, I would always run out and go to the bathroom or go buy some candy.'

Having exhausted The Stooges as a topic, we went on to current comic books. "What do you think of these comics sense as they are today?" The list was as follows

Spider-Man

'Dull, predictable'

The X-Men

'Impenetrable, incomprehensible."

The Fantastic Four

"An object of sadness, they have been so badly mishandled. But I love Paul Ryan's art."

The Incredible Hulk

'When Peter David is on, it's great. When Peter David is not on, it's just another comic book."

Daredevil

"It has had golden moments Those golden moments seem now to be past."

Batman

"I get weary of people screwing around with him—real weary I wrote a Batman story so I know: It's easy to write a Batman story and make him interesting You don't have to keep changing his clothes and changing his identity and breaking his back. These are the ploys and gimmicks and tricks of untalented, sad mingy-minded little people who should not be allowed anywhere near a character as noble and as profitable and as prosperous as The Batman.'

Superman.

"He's gotta get a haircut."

Moving on, I asked Harlan, "Are superheroes the proper genre for a mature audience?"

He shook his head. "I have no idea what that question means."

Well, then, how about price guides? What does Harlan think about comic price guides?

"I suppose," he said slowly, "they have a place in the universe." He paused. "But, then, so do crotched thighs They really aren't a necessity. All they're for is for people who don't like reading comics but who do like making money off them one way or another."

I had traveled to Harlan and Susan Ellison's home to learn more about his upcoming Dark Horse project: *Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor*, a marvelous collaboration producing a new form of a wide variety of Ellison stories. To me, it's a realization of one of my favorite comic-book forms, almost unseen since The Golden Age: the anthology comic book which offers a wide variety of comics stories. (Remember *Comics Cavalcade*? Remember what *Action Comics* used to be? *Detective Comics*? *Police Comics*? *Who*? Youth has its compensations, but you don't get memories of some great things.) For Harlan the project also serves as hand-held storyboards for a cable TV series proposal which may yet appear on home screens. For the wide-flung cult of Ellison collectors, the comic book will be yet another must-have that will be devilishly hard to find once comic shops sell out.

Initially, Dark Horse produced *Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor Special*, which shipped in January for $4.95. If you missed it when it first went on sale, see whether your store can back-order it, once the edition sells out, it will join an ever-growing list of Ellison appearances that instantly become expensive the moment they go out of print. Starting in late March, there will be an ongoing series called *Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor*. And, through the entire comics-publishing project, Harlan is completely involved, from picking artists to writing new stories to lit cover paintings

Would he like his involvement in comics to increase?

"I expect my involvement in comics to continue as it has since the day I was old enough to read." He laughed with some incredulity at the question. "Which is that I will continue buying comics and reading comics and talking about comics

"Nobody asks me, 'How would you like your involvement with books to continue?'

"I buy books and I read books.

"Nobody asks me, 'How would you like your involvement with movies to continue?'"

He stopped short and gestured impatiently.

"This is a dopey question. My involvement with comics is exactly the same as my involvement with everything else in life. I breathe and read and eat and urinate regularly—and these things I will continue to do. along with buying comics regularly.

"Would I like it to increase?

"No, I would not like it to increase. It is hard enough doing one comic book—*Dream Corridor*—it is enormously time-consuming, painstaking and difficult.

"I have discovered—and this is something I haven't said publicly, that may get me in trouble—but as crazy as I know writers to be, as duplicitous and slippery as I know writers to be, we are models of arrant goodwill in comparison to artists, every one of whom should be nailed down like a mad thing.

"I have never seen people who lie with such alacrity—who tell you, 'Oh, yes, it'll be done tomorrow,' and they haven't even contemplated going near it."

His tone sharpened as he proceeded eagerly, "They will say yes to every assignment. They will be late with everything: The best artists in the world in comics are absolute dementos." He almost stammered, as he hunted for words to express himself. "You can't even treat them like children You can't even treat them like Quantrill's Raiders There is no way to deal with them

You are utterly and totally at their mercy.

'How any comic book ever gets out anywhere even remotely on time is a subject for vast confabulations of great thinkers to work on. I don't know how it's done It's no wonder that most editors are mean."

I laughed, but he continued to expostulate, getting into his shtick like a stand-up comedian.

"Take Bob Schreck." Schreck is the Dark Horse editor who handled *Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor Special*—and a favorite of those who have known him over the years in the business

He continued. "—the meanest human being in the world. This is a man who would bite the head off a kitten; and he wasn't born that way, he was made that way. This man should have been sainted. He should have been beatified. Instead, he has been turned into a monster Because he's had to deal with comics artists! He roams the city streets at 3, 4 o'clock in the morning, looking for random cars to kick, random kittens to bite the heads off – and it's all because he has to deal with comic-book artists!

"They're insane! My God, I never had an idea they were like this. You talk to them and they seem to be normal. But they're hideous monsters, all of them!"

Endeavoring to inject a note of calm, I gently asked whether it was just the lying or whether there was something more

'More than the lying? This isn't enough for you? You can't believe a word they say! And they all have weird diets Ask Kelley Jones what he eats! I can't even begin to tell you. The mind shies away from such knowledge. Body parts. Neurotic insects. Endangered wheatgerms. Tissue paper. Cuisine minceur. Gnts and tuna fish. I'm talkin' weird here. Major weird. Mashed potatoes with their hands. They all eat weird things."

As I sat giggling, he continued, "I'm sorry, the terror made me lose control. I can't even begin to tell you—and there's many other ghoulish and repellent things about artists They're just odd."



A SCENE FROM ELLISON'S FAMOUS *AVENGERS/HULK* CROSSOVER. THESE DAYS, ELLISON SAYS OF *THE INCREDIBLE HULK*, "WHEN PETER DAVID IS NOT ON IT, IT'S JUST ANOTHER COMIC BOOK."

Next question: which artists would he really like to work with

"Vermeer, Bosch Escher, Klimt I've always liked Picasso. I think Picasso is good Lionel Feininger

"I could probably work with Otto Soglow," the artist responsible for the pantomime strip *The Little King*, ages ago.

"He had a lot of scripts." I joke

Harlan laughed. "Well, you didn't have to do a lot of scripting for Otto, but he could sure handle a gag. He could also take a hell of a punch.

"Which ones would I like to work with? I'd like to work with one of my best friends, Frank Miller, if he'd ever get off his ass

"I'll work with anybody who won't drive me crazy."

He paused and then sobered up a bit

"Kidding aside, it's probably poetic justice. I have driven so many editors crazy that it's probably the universe getting back at me and saying, 'OK, let's even the score a little here.'"

There was another Camron question. "From your point of view, what is it that set off Gary Groth and started the whole feud?"

Harlan responded, "Who?"

"Gary Groth."

He responded again, "Who?"

"Gary Groth."

"Who?"

'Gary Groth."

"Are you speaking in tongues? I don't understand a word you're saying."

"Gary Groth."

"I'm terribly sorry. I've lines has gone dead.'

[ED. NOTE: It was almost a decade ago when Ellison and Groth were sued for making and publishing, respectively, allegedly libelous comments about former Spectre writer Michael Fleisher. As Harlan said afterward, "We prevailed," although the lawsuit dissolved the relationship between the two men.] During the lawsuit, when you saw some professionals from the industry coming and testifying against you, how did that color your perspective of the industry as a whole? What effect has this had on your work in the industry?

"First of all," Harlan responded, "It was not 'professionals.' It was one: Jim Shooter. After the trial, after we won, the jury foreman told us the jurors didn't believe a word he said.

"No, it didn't color my attitude about the industry at all. What it did was reinforce my opinion of most of the people in the industry: With notable exceptions, working in the comics gulag forces the average person to become a timorous coward. No one came to the trial. Here was a major industry trial, and no one showed up. They were so culturally

numb, they couldn't even work up the muscle to attend a federal district court trial that impacted directly on their Freedom of the Press. It was just sad, pure sad, that's all."

On to another question from Marc Camron, perhaps my last of the session.

"Thank you," Harlan interrupted, sounding grateful, his voice growing hoarse after hours and hours of conversation. "Because, by the way, I died today. Hadn't you heard?"

Proceedings had been interrupted at one point by a phone call from someone who had heard via a computer bulletin-board service that Harlan had died. Harlan had put that rumor to rest but played with the concept for the remainder of the day.

Harlan's voice was giving out, so I went to Camron's last question: What are your guilty pleasures (things that you are embarrassed to admit that you enjoy) in movies, TV and comics?

"Well," he said slowly, "if they're guilty pleasures, you wouldn't admit them. But I admit them freely. I always have.

"My guilty pleasures in movies are the films of Ken Russell, which I love they're over the top—and exceeded only by my pleasure in Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula*, which is like Ken Russell let loose. Somebody said, 'How can you like a film like Coppola's *Dracula*?' I said, 'It's like going to High Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral. It's all pomp and circumstance. It's pageant; that's what it is. I love to see people run amuck. And Ken Russell runs amuck more talentedly than anyone.

"If you ask me who's the most talented director I know, after Kurosawa and Resnais, I would have to say: David Cronenberg—a rara avis, one of a kind. My interpretation of 'guilty pleasure' is people say, 'You like Ken Russell? His pictures make no sense.' You watch *Lair of the White Worm*, you've got to say, 'This is the product of a real demented mind.'

"And, yes, that's what I like about it."

On television?

"My guilty pleasure which I've told everybody as often as I could, was *The People's Court* with Judge Wapner. I watched it, not faithfully, but religiously every single day. It's now off the air and I feel much the less for it. When I saw *Rain Man*, and Raymond had to be there to watch Judge Wapner, I said, 'He ain't as crazy as he looks.' Raymond understands.

"It was an absolutely brilliant show; it was a wonderful show about real life, as opposed to everything else on television.

"My guilty pleasure now, I suppose, is only *Animaniacs*, which is so good, it may not really be a guilty pleasure. I can't think of anything I watch that I'm ashamed to tell anyone I watch. I love pro football; I can't stand college football, but I love pro ball. I hate golf; I hate tennis. Susan makes me watch tennis when Wimbledon is on. I hate it."

Susan laughed, as he continued. "I'm an abused husband. I never make her watch football. I never say, 'Hey, honey the Saints are playing; come on and watch.' She likes some, but she'll sit here with a book and read. I love watching pro ball but, if she doesn't watch that, it's fine by me and I'm not a fanatic about it. But when it's Wimbledon, that's the worst—and the U.S. Open. She makes me watch these idiots. These idiots hit this little white ball, always grunting like pigs. It's terrible. They're all very unattractive people, I feel. Some don't shave on purpose, some tie their hair back in weird ways, the women—you can all see their underpants. I don't need this. I'm an adult; do you understand what I'm saying?

"Exceeding the horror of tennis for me there is only the ultra-horror of golf. Golf is the stupidest game invented in the history of the universe. You need land to house poor people? Use the golf courses. It'll only inconvenience guys in lime-green polyester slacks and women with blue hair.

"Watching fishing is stupid. Doing fishing is not stupid—as long as you don't bait the hook. Why would you want to drag a fish up and watch its gills flapping and gasping for air? That's ugly and despicable. But to sit in a boat like a person, and you have a string hanging over the side, and you rock back and forth, and you whistle a little tune, and you look at the sky and you say, 'Well, they'll be biting pretty soon': You know that's a good thing. I like that a lot."



"[H]IS DUPLICITOUS AND SLIPPERY AS I KNOW WRITERS TO BE, WE ARE MODELS OF ARRANT GOODWILL IN COMPARISON TO ARTISTS, EVERY ONE OF WHOM SHOULD BE NAILED DOWN LIKE A MAD THING."

And the guilty pleasure of comics?

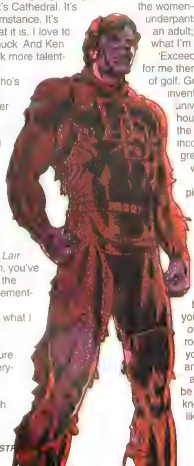
"It used to be *The Spectre* when Michael Fleisher was writing it, because it was so bloody and demented. People would say, 'How can you read that?' I would say, 'I love it, I love it.'

"Now, all my pleasures are grounded in good taste: *Xombi*, *Next Men*, *Concrete*, *Sin City*. These are all things I really enjoy. I haven't got a guilty pleasure in comics."

He fumbled for expression, then brightened.

"Oh, I know absolutely what it is. I love —" ▲

We leave the discussion in midsentence. As this project was conceived, the basic proposal was to break the conversations into three parts. You'll find Part Two in Comics Buyer's Guide, *and the third and final part in* Sci-Fi Universe.



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HHIC0

OSTRANDER IN PARADISE



By Craig Shutt

With titles such as *Grimjack*, *Wasteland* and *Suicide Squad* on his resume, John Ostrander has known the dubious joys of being a cult writer. Now, riding a wave of popular and critical acclaim for his *Spectre* series and hot off a best-selling *Bishop* mini-series, those days at last may be behind him.

"*The Spectre* absolutely helped change the perception of me to being a hot writer again," Ostrander agrees. "I think my writing on the character is good, but it's not better than some of my other things. It's just getting more notice." So much so, in fact, that a number of companies have lined up his services, and he's even begun working on some creator-owned concepts.

"I'm developing a half-dozen of my own fun characters," he says. "But with the market as soft as it is right now, they may have to wait awhile." Those ideas include concepts created with artists Jan Duursema and Tom Mandrake (who's worked with Ostrander on *Grimjack*, *Firestorm* and now, *Spectre*).

Those are heady prospects for a guy who got into the business 11 years ago at the age of 35, much later than most creators take the plunge. His entry came via Mike Gold (one of the founders of Chicago's First Comics), who knew of Ostrander's background as a playwright. Gold had seen several of Ostrander's plays, including his best-known work, *Bloody Bess*, a tale of two female pirates that was produced by Chicago's Organic Theater and then toured internationally.

A native of the Windy City who moved east only a few years ago, Ostrander has been a rabid comics fan all his life. It's a trait Gold put to use when First was being launched. Ostrander's first script dealt with Gargon, Mistress of War, a back-up title in First Comics' first comic, *Warp* #1 (March 1983).

"One of my great delights in writing those stories was that it gave me a way to explain why I was spending all that money on comics every week," he laughs. Ostrander has read comics all his life, and he hopes to pass that enthusiasm to a new generation of comic writers. He teaches weekly classes at both the Joe Kubert School and at New York City's School of Visual Arts (with Dennis O'Neil). "I've always enjoyed warping young minds," he says. "I think it's necessary to put something back into the industry. It certainly can use more good writers, and I hope I can help some of them gain their own voices."



Ostrander gained his own voice in those First back-ups, then took over *Starslayer* with issue #9 (October 1983) after it moved from Pacific Comics. In issue #10, he introduced a back-up strip starring a swashbuckling free spirit called Grimjack. That strip became the first of several Ostrander characters to develop a strong cult following, especially after it gained its own title in August 1984. Ostrander admits that he's part of that cult himself.

"*Grimjack* is my favorite work, no question," he says. "How could it not be? It was the first thing that got me noticed, along with [*Grimjack* artist] Tim Truman. You could say that the cornerstone of our careers was built on *Grimjack*."

Part of the character's appeal, he says, comes from his uniqueness—at least at the time. "There was nothing like him appearing on the stands," he explains. "Grimjack was older and kind of dark. The editors were concerned if that kind of grim-and-gritty look would be too severe for the market to support." Before you fall down laughing, remember that this was before *Dark Knight* and *Watchmen* made it imperative that every hero scowl.

Grimjack brought out his best writing, Ostrander admits. "I just loved doing it." He created the character's basics and took it to First, after which Truman was brought onto the project. "I changed the contracts to make Tim co-creator because his visual stuff added so much to the character," he explains. "I had the original idea, but Tim brought it to life. One thing I've learned, especially from Tim, is if you have a good artist with a good visual eye, you get out of his way."

When First folded its line, *Grimjack* went down with the ship. Gold moved to DC Comics and Ostrander followed. There he plotted the *Legends* miniseries (DC's first post-*Crisis* crossover) and took up the writing chores on *Firestorm*, where he stayed until the series' conclusion. He also kicked off another cult favorite, *Suicide Squad*.

"Next to *Grimjack*, *Suicide Squad* is my most-requested title to be revived," he says. "A month doesn't go by that it isn't brought up to me

"THE SPECTRE'S TOO POWERFUL FOR MOST STORIES, BUT AS SOON AS YOU DE-POWER HIM, HE BECOMES JUST ANOTHER CAPED AND COWLED CHARACTER."



The fans are still loyal." The reason, he suggests, is that "We had to show the villains being capable, even if they were nasty and untrustworthy." As with many of his series, he also thinks the interplay made the characters stand out. "They didn't always like each other, but they had to find a way to work together for awhile."

During this time, he also took part in an 18-issue experiment called *Wasteland*, under Gold's editorial guidance. It featured stories by Ostrander and Chicago writer Del Close with a rotating cast of artists that included Don Simpson, David Lloyd, George Freeman and William Messner-Loebs. It, too, gained a small but devoted following.

"I'm perversely proud of *Wasteland*," Ostrander says. "There's been nothing like it and may never be anything like it again." The stories featured dark humor and wild premises, ranging in tone from "genuinely creepy to creepy and funny. But it was obvious we weren't going to be gaining more. It was a very draining series for me to do. When we stopped, I felt like I had done all the *Wasteland* stories I had in me."

Ostrander's next title came from Valiant, where he was asked to throw *Magnus* into a three-year war that gave that book a new direction.

"Everyone assumed I had an exclusive contract with DC, and I never did," he explains. "I realized that it doesn't pay for a freelancer to put all his eggs into one basket. I thought it was time to spread out a bit." When *Magnus's* new direction didn't catch on, the editors and Ostrander agreed he should shift to *Eternal Warrior* and let someone else try to turn *Magnus* around.

Ostrander also ran into rough waters when he picked up the reins on *Hawkman* with the help of his former partner, Tim Truman. They worked on it



together following Truman's three-part *Hawkworld* series. "Anytime I can work with Tim, it's a pleasure not to be denied," he says. But the series began generating heat when it differed from previously set continuity for the Silver Age Hawkman. It was a dilemma Ostrander wished had been avoided.

"I didn't feel we needed to pick up the ongoing series exactly where the miniseries left off," he explains. "As soon as Hawkman leaves Thanagar and lands on modern-day Earth, we've altered continuity, and a certain amount of controversy arose. In retrospect, it needlessly cheesed off readers who might have liked the series otherwise. Those who read it and got past the continuity problems enjoyed it, I think."

He appreciates those concerns, he says. "My work on *Spectre* shows that I respect continuity. I like to take past elements and weave my own picture. I'm not concerned with being faithful to every page and panel, but I do want to be faithful to the spirit and to honor all the people who have been involved."

Ostrander has harbored a fondness for the *Spectre* for some time, and when he learned that Mandrake was available—and, equally as important, that *The Spectre* was

available—he jumped at the chance. Tom loves the Spectre and always wanted to do him too," he explains. We couldn't wait."

The only problem, Gold had pointed out to him previously, was that no one can write more than three *Spectre* stories without ending up in a formula. "The Spectre's too powerful for most stories, but as soon as you de-power him, you lose the very visuals, the iconography, that makes him the Spectre," Ostrander explains. "Then he becomes just another caped and cowled character."

The *Spectre* team solved that quandary by focusing on the other part of his persona: Jim Corrigan. For research, Ostrander turned to the unlikely source of early Dick Tracy comic strips. "Corrigan is a hard-boiled, early 1930s plain-clothes detective," he explains. "He's tough as nails, he's not politically correct and he's something of a bastard."

That element tempers the Spectre's powers. "He has the powers of a god, but he's limited by his vision of those powers. And his vision is that of a mortal man. From that premise, there are natural things he will and won't do. How he uses his powers depends on how he thinks about using them."

Father Craemer, who first appeared in *Suicide Squad*, had developed nuances in much the same manner. "He's a priest, and he doesn't turn out to be a jerk—what a change for comics."

John deadpans: I didn't see any reason to write the cliche of the evil religious man who conjures up demons, etc., when I know better."



Religion has proven a dicey subject for mainstream comics, but Ostrander says he has received no interference from DC. "We're treating these concepts very respectfully, and that's a key point," he explains. "There is no derision here at all. This book has strong theological underpinnings, in much the same way that *Hawkman* had strong civic underpinnings. It's a cosmic book like a lot of other comics these days, but it's cosmic in a theological sense."

The title is heating up these days, as readers digest "Desecration," the four-issue arc now under way. In that story, Corrigan is being challenged to consider who avenges the murder of souls and dreams. "I hope our long-time readers respond well. But after all, the story is called 'Desecration'" he chortles. "So I imagine there will be a certain amount of outrage. I'm expecting cards and letters."

Continually upping the ante on *Spectre* has kept the book popular and also brought him more attention. That led to his recently completed *Bishop* miniseries and to his ongoing work on *Jink*, a new series from WaRP, the publishers of *Elfquest*. The story takes place 100 years in the future, when the elf colony's existence is in dispute. "It's a different type of writing than my usual thing," he admits. "But [WaRP owners Wendy and Richard Pini] have been very open and generous about letting me explore ideas. I'm writing *Jink* for Wendy; if she responds to it, I know I'm on the right track."

Later this summer Ostrander and Mandrake will combine for a *Wolverine* graphic novel, which should bring attention from yet another comics audience. Are there other characters Ostrander would like to handle? Although he admits fondness for DC's Challengers of the Unknown, he says there are no characters he'd kill to do, in part because some have been changed so radically from the versions he remembers.

There is, of course, one exception. "*Grimjack* will always be the great love I've got," he says. "There will be a time when I'm ready to walk away from the *Spectre*, but I don't know that I can ever completely walk away from *Grimjack*. I can see myself writing *Grimjack* for the rest of my days." It could happen. *Grimjack's* rights are owned by Classics International and negotiations have been inching forward. "I do see things happening," he says. "But I don't want to talk about it until something's signed."

In the meantime, his books keep pushing themselves higher on the sales charts, his list of publishers grows longer and he continues developing his own characters for later publication. "Five years from now, I have no idea what I'll be working on," he says. "But right now, the future is wide open, and it's getting more interesting every day." ▲



HERO COVER ART

BIG-TIME WAKE-UP CALL!!!

You say you want to be an artist, but you lack drive and motivation? You keep procrastinating, always saying, "I'll send my stuff into *HERO* next month"? Perhaps this will provide some incentive:

HULK #181!

One little word, three little numbers, and the first appearance of Wolverine. Not a joke! Not a dream! Not a clever promotional gimmick! (Well, maybe sorta that last one.)

Send art to:
Boys at *HERO*—Cover Art
1920 Highland Ave.
Lombard, IL
60148-6162

One prize, one winner, no swipes, no kidding. Sorry, but the legal guys say we own all submissions.





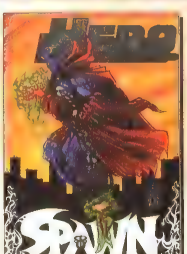


GRAND PRIZE!

Benjie Calama out of Sacramento, CA, earns himself a bushel of signed image books for his Manga-style X-Men, but what the heck did he put in the Professor's slurpy!?



Janet L. Hetherington of Ottawa, Ontario, sent us this pic of WW's new look. Kids love lycra.



Dying is easy, it's dressing that's hard. Just ask Spawn; or Dwayne E. Holmes of Valley, AL.



The JLA hopes J'onn makes lasagna for dinner, thanks to Steven Tsapelas, Bethpage, NY.

1ST PRIZE!



George Zepeda out of Amarillo, TX, has the Tick wondering: Who leaves all these pesky nameplates hanging around? Enjoy the platinum *WildC.A.T.s* #7!



...ller A. Guevarra of Haledon, NJ, shows us the new and improved Death Dealer.



Calvin Armstrong in NYC brings us *Dragonball Z* heart of the dragon, hair of Sonic the hedgehog

POSTCARD PARANOIA

Remember *The Incredible Shrinking Man*? Great '50s SF-movie rife with the paranoia we savor here—but, funny thing, the real creepiness comes from the slow, sinking feeling that everything is getting larger...



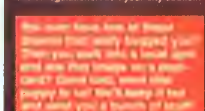
Is bigger really better? Does size really matter? Heck yes! And out Texas way it ain't worth having lessin' it's extra, jumbo or king. Many thanks to Phil O'Dell of Houston for putting us clear on that.



Tom Nayder of Ames, IA, writes, "Dear *HERO*, I was out in Iowa and came up with myself, 'why?'" To send us this postcard is the only reason I can think of. What do they use for fertilizer out in Iowa?



Randall Kirby sent this one in from Ontario, OR, the "Onion Capital of the World." I'm afraid the transportation of giant onions by flatbed truck is against federal regulations. Alert your city council!



GO FIGURE!



No need to worry, Go Figure is back after a brief hiatus. All the fine folks in this installment will receive low numbered Skeleton Warriors (one random winner will receive the very hard to find seaQuest Darwin figure ... but we're not saying who). Now, let's get to it...



Thomas Lotz of Naples, FL, presents a superhero team I really want to see! Of course, Marshal Law would probably kill everybody sooner or later. The good Marshal (Lightning Draw Shadow, Toy Biz Spider-Man head) The Hacker (Toy Biz Spider-Man & Riddler), Private Eye (Toy Biz Batman), Lobo (RoboCop Chainsaw head & body, Headhunter arms), Ertigan (Voltron King Zarkon head, Toy Biz Captain America body & Darkseid's cape), Terror, Inc. (Tyco Goombe head w/toothpicks, Conehead Agent Seedling body & Toy Biz Joker hat) and that happy-go-lucky Mordare (Beldar Conehead head & Toy Biz Sauron body). These are the kind of action figures we'd wait at the Toys 'R' Us for!



Jerry Byer of New Richmond, WI, sent us a kickin' Lady Death made from a Barbie Doll. (There's something wonderfully twisted about that.) The body was, er, "modified" with dental picks and lots and lots of sculpy, then given a layer of hobby clear coat and spray painted. The skull is off a key ring. Great work Jerry!

2ND PRIZE!



Fidel Minor of Poughkeepsie, NY, wants everyone to know that cleaning your ears with your tongue can put you in a bad mood. *Rune* #0 is on its way!

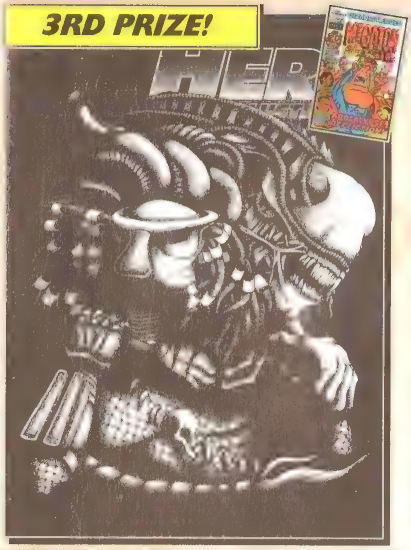


Rico Suave *is* Dean Cain *is* Superman! Gracias, Jerry Bahnsen, Carson City, NV.



Part of a complete breakfast. From Shelby Wayne Robertson, Atwater, CA.

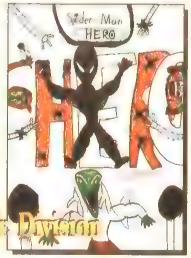
3RD PRIZE!



Kurt Weinreich Jr. of Aurora, CO, had a terrible time getting these guys to pose for him. Hope you enjoy reading *Bizarre Heroes* #1 while recovering.



Sean McMurphy of Martinez, CA, captures the Tick and Arthur on patrol.



Jordan Bainer of Dyer, IN, knows it's the white lab coat that makes the Lizard so cool.

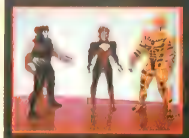
GO FIGURE!



Just can't get enough Death around here! Lann Snell of Ft. Worth, TX, made this Lady D from a Kenner Catwoman, cape from Skeleton Warriors Price Lightstar. Breast implants via hot glue, hair, ring and skulls out of sculpy, clothes from electrical tape, sword from sculpy and hot glue, bracelet and lace done with nylon thread, super glue and lots of patience.



Brad McCurry of Shelby, NC, brings us the ultimate '70s Avengers lineup! Black Knight (S. Wars Magneto), Ms. Marvel (S. Powers Wonder Woman), Scarlet Witch (Poison Ivy), Yellowjacket (Batman, TAS), Black Widow (Cadillacs & Dinos Hannah Dundee and he had better have bought two) and Hawkeye (Black Tom body with a Batman, TAS head). Your Aquaman was killer, too.



With the Age of Apocalypse upon us, you would figure we'd get something like this in the mail. Kudos to Daniel Veesey of Hot Comics and Collectables in Edina, MN, for Wolverine (Weapon X head, legs, arms, 3rd ed. Wolverine torso & stub from a real metal dowel), Sunfire (Pyro head & lower body with Morph's torso & arms) & Jean Grey (Invisible Woman). Proof that air-dry modeling clay and a Dremmill speed tool can alter the course of history.

GO FIGURE!



Caroline the Prime Examiner, looking very dapper indeed, was sent to us all the way from Milano, Italy, by Enrico Seivini. If I have this right, his girlfriend's brother Bruno Apres is the artist, and the figure was sculpted out of modeling soap, cloned out in resin, and painted by artbrush in acrylic colors. Buona Fortuna on the career in sculpting, fellas, and please send in a picture of Sin City's Marv when he gets done!



What lies ahead for the world's greatest custom figure column? How about if all the people whose work makes it to these pages next issue get sets the first series of Spawn figures. So, get up off your duff and get those pictures taken today—we can't wait to send Spawn complete with "board with a nail" to your house today. Send it to "GO FIGURE" c/o of HERO, 1920 Highland Avenue, Suite 222, Lombard IL 60148.

HERO

ENVELOPE ART

1920 Highland Avenue
Suite 222
Lombard, IL 60148

Hey, budding artists! If you've got any confidence in your ability to put pen, pencil, crayon or marker to paper, you oughta let us know—you just might win some pretty neat stuff! However ... if we detect a swipe or trace job, the envelope will be discarded and you will be the source of great ridicule from our editors.

1ST

1st Place WINNER



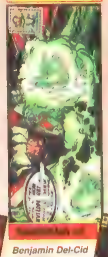
Aron Heisler
Lathrop, SC

2nd Place WINNER



Graig White
Houston, TX

3rd Place WINNER



Benjamin Del-Cid
Melbourne,
Australia

Jr. Division



Kevin Nguyen
Gresham, OR



Paxton Rochon
Denver, CO



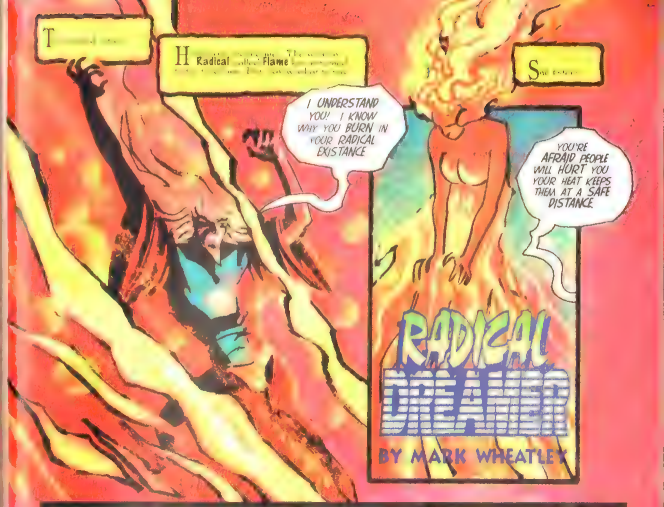
Richard P. Serrao
Montreal, Quebec



Jonathan Hung
Burbank, CA



Christopher Jacob Abel "Skip"
Aliquippa, PA



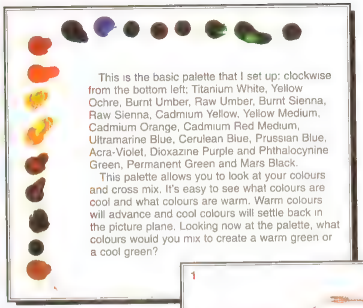


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NEXT: *Burnt Number!*

MARK A. NELSON'S

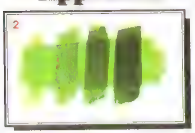
FROM PENCILS TO INKS



This is the basic palette that I set up: clockwise from the bottom left: Titanium White, Yellow Ochre, Burnt Umber, Raw Umber, Burnt Sienna, Raw Sienna, Cadmium Yellow, Yellow Medium, Cadmium Orange, Cadmium Red Medium, Ultramarine Blue, Cerulean Blue, Prussian Blue, Acra-Violet, Dioxazine Purple and Phthalocynine Green, Permanent Green and Mars Black.

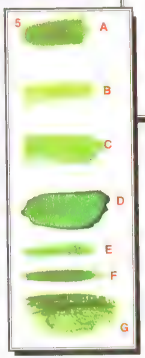
This palette allows you to look at your colours and cross mix. It's easy to see what colours are cool and what colours are warm. Warm colours will advance and cool colours will settle back in the picture plane. Looking now at the palette, what colours would you mix to create a warm green or a cool green?

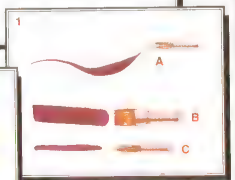
Chapter 19: Being Painted: The Full Color Approach

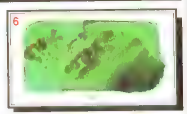












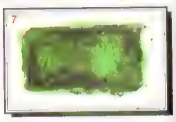


Figure 1) Watercolour brushes come in different shapes: round (A), flat (B) and round (C). Each will give you different types of strokes.

To put it simply, watercolour is a wet media. Your pigment is held in suspension by gum arabic. H_2O colour comes in two different forms: tube, which is a wet fluid form or cake, in which the colour is in a solid block. To use this painting media, all you do is add water. Watercolour, for me, is a very transparent or translucent media. By adding water, you make the colour more transparent. This is shown in figure 2. Figure 3 shows what happens when you build up transparent colour layers. The colour was put down, allowed to dry, then a second stroke of the same transparent colour was put down and finally the third stroke. Figure 4 shows how colours can mix by applying transparent layers or glares.

The type of stroke you use can create a very different look with watercolour (Figure 5).

A) Colour straight out of the tube.

B) Colour with water added but applied very thinly.

C) A wet wash: Colour with a lot of water applied then allowed to dry.

D) Wet into wet: A green wash with blue dropped into it.

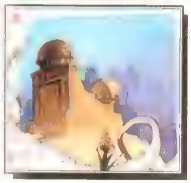
E, F & G) Strokes applied to let the paper texture show through.

Figure 6) More wet into wet. A wet wash was put down, then the colours were worked into it. This will give you a soft edge.

Figure 7) Wet into wet then blotted with a paper towel.







There are many methods of approaching watercolour. Here I'm taking a very traditional one. First, the drawing was done very lightly in pencil. Then I inked the main figures in a brown ink with a crow quill pen on watercolour board. Finally, the colours were applied very thinly and as very transparent washes.

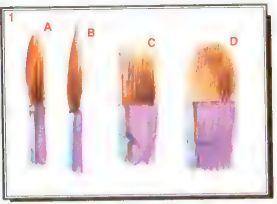
The general attitude of colour application in this method is to work from light to dark. Thusly, a light green wash was applied first, then the form was built up by applying more layers or glazes of colour. The shadows were created with blue and purple washes that were applied towards the end (Figure 1). *HINT: In watercolour, once you put a very dark colour down, it's hard to work over it or lighten that area. So, as with a pencil drawing, you work up to your darks. The paper is the source of your light.*

Working this way, you have to allow for drawing time. Some of the shadows were applied when the greens were wet to get a softer blending, and in other areas, I let each wash dry completely before I applied the second, third and fourth wash.



In Figure 2, the flesh tones were created with a mixture of Cadmium Red, Cadmium Yellow and a lot of water. I don't use white because it makes the colour too opaque and destroys the light coming from the paper. The shadows were a mixture of Acra Violet and Purple. The core of the shadow was a mixture of Acra Violet and Burnt Sienna. Personally, I stay away from the straight earth tones to create shadows. It can make the figure look dirty. So, if I use earth tones for darks, I will add blues, purples or greens to give the colour some warmth. The land was done with a lot of different earth tones, paper towel blocking, toothbrush splatter and the kitchen sink.

Figure 3) The castle and the sky were done without an ink contour, just the pencil line was used. This was done to create a softer look for the background. The castle was laid in first as a Yellow Ochre wash. The darks were built by layers of Yellow Ochre, Acra Violet and purples. The sky was a large wash of Ultramarine Blue with Purple dripped into the wet wash in the lower right-hand corner. Once this dried, it gave the sky a soft feathering of colours. Then I worked in the softer background castle shapes with light glazes of blue and purple. The flowers were a wet into wet wash of yellow and orange. When that dried, I applied the red dots to finish the form.



Acrylic paint will give you a completely different set of methods in which you can work. The pigments are the same, but the binder is different. It's an acrylic polymer, and once it's dry, it's not water soluble like watercolours.

Figure 1) The brushes come in rounds (A & B), flats (C) and filberts (D). The filberts are good for blending colours. They are a combination of the flat and the round

Figure 2) Acrylic allows you to work both transparently and opaquely. Here are some of the samples: A) washy; B) scumbling, which is a method of blending using any brush point you work the pigment out from dark to light; C) wet into wet; D) glazing colours; E) wet into wet, blending colour from dark to light and letting the strokes show and F) wet into wet, blending so no strokes show.

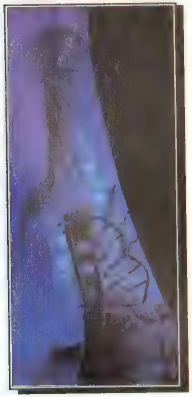
Figure 3) Fleshtones: One of the ways of thinking about flesh is by mixing Cadmium Red, Cadmium Yellow and then adding white (A) Shadows or darks can be created by mixing into the flesh tones B) Acra Violet, C) Curealean Blue, D) Ioxaine Purple, E) Permanent Green and finally F) you can change the values by adding greys.

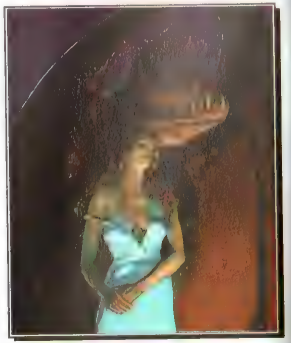




Ms Larson's Bat was perhaps the most fun I've had doing a painting recently. The lighting is the key factor in this piece. The overall mood was created using "the light from below," a horror film technique. This effect allowed me to push the lighting and colours on her fleshtones, created strong textures on the bat and allowed me to mix a lot of techniques. Ms. Larson was painted very opaquely. The bat has all different kinds of surfaces, so dry brush, scumbling and wet into wet techniques were used on him

The castle was started by toning the paper. This means that instead of working from the white of the paper, I toned the surface with a colour, in this case a blue-purple wash. Then darks were used to paint in the bricks, and the lights were painted in last to give the form the final effect.







THE HERO FILES

by Steve Ringgenberg

Forty years later, the question persists: Why are we still talking about EC comics?

Don't ask Al Feldstein. Sure, he was the legendary writer/artist/editor who shepherded EC through its "New Trend" and "New Direction," and sure, he edited *MAD* during its greatest period of success, but he's as baffled as the next guy.

"I know that the stuff that we did was a little bit above average for the comics of its day," he admits. "But literary-wise, they're not anything greater than what's being done today. In fact, far, far less. I think that ... [for] the people that read EC Comics when they were like 10, 12, 14, this may be some way of connecting with those years. I don't know. The stories were good. We had a good time doing them ... I never thought I was creating great literature. I thought we were doing an entertaining job for the media of that moment.

"We weren't aiming at any particular audience. What we were aiming at was an audience that enjoyed good stories, and yes, they were more adult than the average comic book. [Comics] are a medium that had a great potential [and] I felt, what with the Senate investigations and the ensuing self-censorship group, that they destroyed [its] potential."

In the end, Feldstein asserts, what distinguished EC from its competition, and may be responsible for EC's enduring appeal, "was our love for what we were doing and our desire to do something that we enjoyed doing and that we felt we'd be proud of. There are a lot of other factors, too: the varied styles of the artists was a new kind of thing in the comics." Before EC he recalls, "Everybody was imitating each other and there was a stylized kind of norm to the way an artist drew. Everybody imitated [Joe] Simon and [Jack] Kirby or [Charles] Biro and [Bob] Wood stuff and when we started to move into the horror and then later the science fiction and the suspense, and my insistence was that [our artists] all do their own style. In fact, we even tailored stories to the styles of the artists."

But whatever the reasons for its success and longevity in the public consciousness, EC may well be judged the most artistically successful line of comics in this century.





CRYPT THROUGH THE PAST:

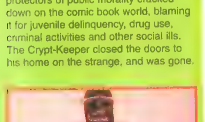
A Concise Multimedia History of *Tales from the Crypt*

by Andy Mangels

In the beginning, there was Cain and Abel. The first murder. The first twist ending. But if the tale is true, then someone, some ... thing, had to be around to record the story. A teller of Tales.

In the 1950s EC Comics introduced the Crypt-Keeper, whose long-dead body survived to tell Tales ... *Tales from the Crypt*. And while the ghoul with the taste for horrible—and horrifying—puns was served with fellow storytellers The Old Witch and The Vault Keeper, his rotting visage still captivated audiences.

The Crypt-Keeper only retired when well-intentioned (and we know what road good intentions pave, *don't we?*) protectors of public morality cracked down on the comic book world, blaming it for juvenile delinquency, drug use, criminal activities and other social ills. The Crypt-Keeper closed the doors to his home on the strange, and was gone.



In 1972 British producers Milton Subotsky and Max J. Rosenberg approached EC Comics head William Gaines about producing a horror film utilizing stories from the various EC horror series, all under the head title of the most famous series of all. Gaines granted them the rights only after he was sure they were going to treat his little hellions well. Subotsky went to work on the script for director Freddie Francis, and *Tales from the Crypt* was launched.

The low-budget film starred Ralph Richardson as the hooded Crypt-Keeper, whose encounter with five tourists in rural England allows him to tell of the great evils that lay locked in their potential. Stars such as Joan Collins, Peter Cushing, Ian Hendry, Robin Phillips, Richard Greene, Patrick Magee and Nigel Patrick joined the project, setting their talents to stones adapted from *Tales from the Crypt*, *Vault of Horror* and *Haunt of Fear*.

It's been called the greatest comic book company that ever was, but whether you agree with that judgment or not, EC comics are considered benchmarks of American culture, prized by collectors and endlessly reprinted, sometimes in such unexpectedly prestigious places as *A Smithsonian Book of Comic-Book Comics*.

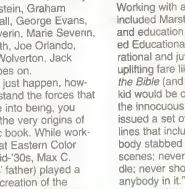


In fact, it's safe to say that with *MAD* magazine, EC left its mark not just on comics but across the face of 20th century pop culture. *MAD* is one of the two most successful humor magazines of the 20th century and, to a large extent, shaped the American sense of humor in the latter half of this century.

The talent responsible for this cultural wave reads like a Who's Who of comic art: Al Feldstein, Harvey Kurtzman, Jack Davis, Wallace Wood, Al Williamson, Frank Frazetta, Johnny Craig, Bernard Krigstein, Graham Ingels, Reed Crandall, George Evans, Will Elder, John Severin, Marie Severin, Joe Kubert, Alex Toth, Joe Orlando, Russ Heath, Basil Wolverton, Jack Kamen ... the list goes on.

EC Comics didn't just happen, however. To fully understand the forces that caused EC to come into being, you have to go back to the very origins of the American comic book. While working as a salesman at Eastern Color Publishing in the mid-'30s, Max C. Gaines (Bill Gaines' father) played a seminal role in the creation of the comics format. His discovery of Seigel and Shuster's Superman, and his partnership with Detective Comics founder Harry Donenfeld have been expounded in great detail elsewhere. Gaines presided over the downtown branch of the DC family, the All-American line, which eventually served as home to such familiar characters as the Green Lantern, the Atom and Dr. Mid-Nite. Among Gaines' most important achievements was his co-creation—along with psychologist and polygraph inventor William Moulton Marston—of *Wonder Woman*.

The first issue of *All-American Comics* also marked the first comics contribution of 17-year-old William Gaines, christening that issue's new trio of military adventurers. "Red, Whitey and Blooey." The elder Gaines winced at his son's suggestion but wound up using it anyway. Bill's other early contribution to comics came at DC, where he designed the decoders used by the Superman of America fan club (as well as the ones adopted by the Wonder Woman fan club and the Junior Justice Society).



After selling his share of DC to Donenfeld and his partner Jack Leibowitz in 1946, Max Gaines briefly retired. But the elder Gaines was a firm believer in the power of comics as a force for education and social good. Working with an editorial board that included Marston and other medical and education professionals, he created Educational Comics, a line of inspirational and juvenile titles that produced uplifting fare like *Picture Stories from the Bible* (and stuff no self-respecting kid would be caught dead reading, like the innocuous *Tiny Tot Comics*). Gaines issued a set of stringent editorial guidelines that included. "Never show anybody stabbed or shot; show no torture scenes; never show a hypodermic needle; never show a coffin, especially with anybody in it."

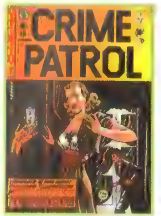
When Max Gaines died in 1947 (from a boating accident in upstate New York), his rotund, bookish son inherited Educational Comics. At the behest of his mother, Gaines very reluctantly became the publisher, as he recalled in a 1985 interview. "I felt that if [my father] couldn't make a go of it, how the hell could I make a go of it, and I wasn't interested in it anyway. And I really did it as a favor to my mother. My advice to her was: 'Shut it down.' I'm glad she didn't."

Within four years of taking over, Bill Gaines created a totally new line of horror, science-fiction, crime and war comics while gleefully shattering every taboo his father established. In the process he racked up respectable sales and aroused the wrath of parents, educators, politicians, the clergy *and* the other comic publishers ... but let's start at the beginning.

EC Comics' history can be broken down into several distinct eras, starting with the "Pre-Trend" era. The "Pre-Trend" EC that Bill Gaines inherited was a floundering company, $100,000 in the red. Unsure of what to do with his new company, Gaines was content to follow trends established by more innovative editors and writers like Charles Biro, or Joe Simon and Jack Kirby.

Then in March of 1948, a talented artist named Al Feldstein walked in through Gaines' door, and the rest, as they say, is history. Feldstein, who had been doing teenage humor mags like *Corliss Archer* and *Sunny*, was hired by Gaines to draw *Going Steady with Peggy*, a teenage humor comic meant to cash in on the popularity of *Archie*. Fortunately, the teenage humor craze died before Feldstein even finished *Peggy*, so he and Gaines began working together as a creative team, producing other trend-following titles like *War Against Crime*, *Crime Patrol*, *Gunfighter* and *Saddle Romances*. This lasted about two years, until the prolific and talented Feldstein suggested that instead of following trends, EC try to set them.

Both Gaines and Feldstein were horror fans, so as one of their first innovations, they tried experimenting with one-shot horror stories in *Crime Patrol* and *War Against Crime*. Feldstein created the Crypt-Keeper, then followed that up by creating the Vault-Keeper, and lastly the Old Witch, all more or less inspired by radio fare like *The Witch's Tale* and *Inner Sanctum*. When the sales figures came in, it was clear to Gaines and Feldstein that they were on to something. Sol Cohen the editor Gaines had inherited along with EC) thought so little of the horror books that he departed for an editorial post at Avon. Needing an editor in a hurry, Gaines naturally turned to Al Feldstein.



1950 was the dawn of the EC age as we know it. Trumpeted on the covers as "A New Trend in Comic Books," the renamed *Entertaining* Comics replaced all of its original titles with a line of horror, crime and science fiction titles, beginning with *The Crypt of Terror* (three issues later, it became *Tales from the Crypt*, the title it kept until its cancellation in 1954. Gaines and Feldstein didn't get around to explaining the Crypt-Keeper's origin until 1952, in the story "Lower Berth" (*Tales from the Crypt* #32).

The first of EC's horror titles was so successful it spawned a companion title: *Vault of Horror*, helmed by the Vault-Keeper, who was even creepier than the Crypt-Keeper. Concurrently with EC's next titles, *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy*, *The Haunt of Fear* debuted. EC's Old Witch, who stirred the "The Witch's Cauldron" in *Fear*, was probably the most unprepossessing old crone in comics, and had been appearing in the other horror hosts' titles since their inception.

"That was a good three or four years," Gaines recalled somewhat wistfully, 30 years later. "I always say those were the happiest days. In those days I had nothing to do with the business, I had a business manager and I was just having fun with Feldstein creating this stuff and plotting and



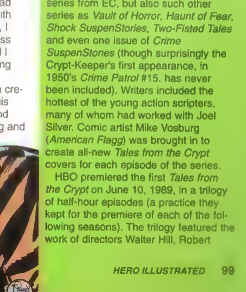
Tales from the Crypt was a success, leading Subotsky to release a companion film, *Vault of Horror*, in 1973. A new cast of lesser stars (including future *Doctor Who* star Tom Baker) were brought in to re-create five stories. The film did alright (and was later rereleased as *Tales from the Crypt, Part II*), but another sequel was not in the offing.

In 1989, HBO decided to rouse the Crypt-Keeper out of retirement. This time, the zombified zingmaster was teamed up with an all-star crew of top producers: Richard Donner (*Superman*), action-meister Joel Silver (*Die Hard*), David Giler and Walter Hill (*Alien* producers) and Robert Zemeckis (*Back to the Future*). They were determined to create an innovative series that would not only catch viewers' eyes, but also the interest of Hollywood elite.

They hired top makeup man Kevin Yagher to design and build the animatronic puppet that represented the Crypt-Keeper. The rotting punster would appear in intros and outros for each episode, lending his cackling comments to the grisly proceedings. Stand-up comic John Kassir bagged the role of the voice of the horror host. Composer Danny Elfman, hot off *Batman*, was brought in to create the theme music.

Stories for the series were adapted from not only the *Tales from the Crypt* series from EC, but also such other series as *Vault of Horror*, *Haunt of Fear*, *Shock SuspenStories*, *Two-Fisted Tales* and even one issue of *Crime SuspenStories* (though surprisingly the Crypt-Keeper's first appearance, in 1950's *Crime Patrol* #15, has never been included). Writers included the hottest of the young action scripters, many of whom had worked with Joel Silver. Comic artist Mike Vosburg (*American Flagg*) was brought in to create all-new *Tales from the Crypt* covers for each episode of the series.

HBO premiered the first *Tales from the Crypt* on June 10, 1989, in a trilogy of half-hour episodes (a practice they kept for the premiere of each of the following seasons). The trilogy featured the work of directors Walter Hill, Robert



Zemeckis and Richard Donner. Stars included William Sadler, Larry Drake (*Dr. Giggles*) and Robert Wuhl (*Batman*). The remaining trio of episodes unspooled weekly, with Lea Thompson, Amanda Plummer and A. Whitney Brown starring.

An unqualified success, *Crypt* was renewed for a second season, with more of Hollywood catching on to the fun. The second season premiere trilogy aired on April 20, 1990, with stars such as Demi Moore and Lance Henriksen. Perhaps the biggest surprise was the name of the director of the middle segment: "The Switch." Making his directorial debut was none other than the old muscle-head himself, Arnold Schwarzenegger!



Fifteen more episodes made this the longest *Crypt* season ever. Other stars who showed up to the *Crypt* included comic-writer-and-perpetual-bad-guy Miguel Ferrer, a pre-*Lois & Clark* Teri Hatcher, Michael Ironside, Iggy Pop, Kathy Sagal, Bobcat Goldthwait, Don Rickles, Carol Kane, Harry Anderson, brother-to-the-makeup-man Jeff Yagher, the vile pre-Rush Limbaugh Morton Downey, Jr. and, for a return visit, Larry Drake.

The third season premiered with a trio of interesting directors, names known to comic fans: Michael J. Fox (*Back to the Future*) made his directorial debut on "The Trap;" Tom Mankiewicz (who'd written the *Batman* film that didn't get made for a decade); while Steven de Souza's many credits include recently adapting *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* for animation and *The Flintstones* for live-action. Stars for the third season included Ten Gen, Bruno Kirby, Kyle MacLachlan, Beau Bridges, Jon Lovitz, Sandra Bernhard, Whoopi Goldberg, Malcolm McDowell, Kirk Douglas, Dan Aykroyd and, in his second screen appearance, Lance Henriksen.

The final episode of the third season, "Yellow," was actually developed for what the producers hoped would be *Crypt*'s first spin-off, a *Two-Fisted Tales* series also based on an EC comic series. With all-out action in place of the horror and gore of *Crypt*, it was hoped the network would jump

FOX wasn't sure about the bankability of the *Tales* franchise and aired a one-hour pilot on Jan. 18, 1992. The special had no promotion and would have disappeared without a trace, except for a very important loophole: The producers inserted the two half-hour episodes, "Showdown," and "King Of The Road," being an editor, and it was just great."

While their horror stories featured gruesome tales of revenge, cannibalism, vampires, werewolves, dismemberment and the walking dead, Feldstein and Gaines approached their scripts with considerable wit and humor, spiced with tongue-in-cheek puns and the three hosts' grimly funny commentary. The story titles themselves were often puns, such as "Tain't the Meat, It's the Humanity," the tale of a crooked butcher whose tainted meat kills his son

He winds up being dismembered and sold by his wife at his own meat counter. "Foul Play," featuring one of Jack Davis' most notorious art jobs, features a murderous baseball player who gets dismembered by his victim's teammates, with his body parts used for a ghastly midnight baseball game. Bill Gaines ruefully admitted later "Foul Play" was "one of our worst ... Al and I were turning out a story a day, and it's not easy to turn out a story a day. And that day we were probably very late coming up with a plot and so we took this thing and did it out of desperation because we absolutely had to have a story written that day. It was a bad story, it was a stupid story. It was certainly in bad taste. And I'm sorry we did it, but we did it."

Davis, one of the most prolific of the EC artists, was equally at home drawing ghastly horror or gritty war tales, and later proved himself to be one of the prime exponents of *MAD*'s wild humor. In retrospect, Davis had strong reservations about the horror comics, as he noted in a 1984 interview: "It was frightening, and I batted out. I really went after it. Every time you'd take a job in to Bill Gaines, they'd pay you on the spot and give you another story ... I was just turning it out and didn't realize that I was doing something so horrible and grotesque. It really didn't bother me too much until they started having the investigation in Washington. So I figured maybe I'm doing something bad. I think that I would have liked to have done something nicer, but I didn't. It came pretty easy to me."





Johnny Craig, who edited *Vault of Horror*, while writing and drawing the lead feature, also had second thoughts about the horror work. According to George Evans, Craig was reluctant to draw the infamous "severed head" cover (*Crime SuspenStories* #22) that became the subject of a testy exchange between Senator Estes Kefauver and Bill Gaines as an example of bad taste in comics. "... he said that he hadn't wanted to do it, that he tried to get them to change it," Evans recalled, "but they wouldn't, and when it came down to it, he was an employee and he did it. But he said it did trouble him."

Marie Severin, who joined the EC staff in 1952, had her own doubts about the propriety of the horror stories and would often color the most explicit panels bright blue to register her distaste, and to mitigate some panels' horrific nature. "You had to tone it down—some of the eyeballs and things. I didn't want us to get in trouble. I did that mostly out of sheer terror that we would be arrested and sent up to Kefauver to have our fingers smashed or something."

"I know it bothered Graham Ingels," George Evans said of the late artist whose aptitude for such grue earned him the nickname "Ghastly." Even so, He thought these things were fun, and you can see it in his pictures ... he took the same attitude I did, that everybody likes to sit and ... gather around and tell horror stories and be horrified in a safe way." One of the best examples of Ingels' tongue-in-cheek approach is "A Little Stranger," his classic origin of the Old Witch, in *Haunt of Fear* #14.

Evans himself thought that the gory EC horror stories were just good, clean fun. "I had two daughters at the time and I would take the books home and they'd read them and sit there chuckling and say, 'Ho, look at this!' And their friends came in and, geeze we'd have 15, 20 kids, all of them swapping these books and reading them. None of the parents objected ... Nobody seemed to get all that upset until the censor[s] .. and the like began to make all those noises."

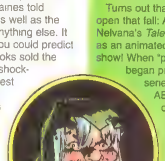


The horror comics were a big enough hit to inspire a host (by one count at least 150 titles) of decidedly inferior imitations with stories that were often more disgusting than EC's. EC's horror comics eventually sold a respectable 450,000 copies, which drew readers away from other publishers—which didn't endear Gaines and Feldstein to their competition, as they were to learn later. "*Shock* and *Crime SuspenStories* always sold well," Bill Gaines told *Gauntlet* in 1991. "Not as well as the horror, but better than anything else. It fell just about the way you could predict ... the most shocking books sold the best and the next most shocking book sold the next best and so on. Really, what we considered our class act, the science fiction, sold the worst. At the beginning the science fiction was selling three [hundred thousand] but then it fell off Harvey's war books were doing well until the Korean War was over and then they fell off Then *MAD* came along, and *MAD* had its peak as a comic book with 750,000. I think. Now that was very, very good, better than the horror comics." Ironically, it was the horror books that would later jeopardize the very existence of EC and *MAD*, and set in motion forces that led to the creation of *MAD* the magazine. The horror books were so popular that in 1954 Gaines and Feldstein were planning a fourth horror book, *Crypt of Terror*. But because of the furor over the horror comics, the first issue of the new *Crypt* into the fourth season of *Tales from the Crypt*.

By 1992, guest starring in—or directing—an episode of *Crypt* was the chic thing to do. Much like *Batman* series of the 1960s, this campy series (also based on a comic book) was seen as a fun job, not work. Treat Williams, Sonia Braga, Tia Carrere, Sugar Ray Leonard, rocker Greg Allman, Christopher Reeve, Meatloaf, David Warner, Twiggy Larson, Kathy Ireland, Heavy D, Timothy Dalton and Margot Kidder all starred, while director and writer credits included Tom Hanks, *The Exorcist*'s William Friedkin, *Night Court*'s Harry Anderson, Kevin Yagher, Joel Silver and longtime *Batman* and *Wonder Woman* TV writer Stanley Ralph Ross.

Into 1993, HBO announced that this would be the "final" season for *Tales From The Crypt*, and stars piled on to appear. Clocking in were Tim Curry, John Shea, Adam West, Miguel Ferrer (again), Roger Daltrey, Brooke Shields, Cheech Marin, Priscilla Presley, Traci Lords and Martin Sheen. Kyle MacLachlan made his directorial debut on "As Ye Sow."

Turns out that wasn't the only *Crypt* to open that fall; ABC had accepted Nelvana's *Tales From The Crypt-Keeper* as an animated Saturday morning kid's show! When "parental watchdog" groups began protesting the horror series' berth on the schedule, ABC and Nelvana went into overtime to caution about the series. They produced a four-page "Parent's Preview" of the series and sent it to those who called the specially-announced "*Crypt* concerns" line. Complete with testimonial's from a child psychologist, diagrammed morals for each episode and comparisons to fairy tales and *The Twilight Zone*, the "Preview" seemed an almost perfect endnote to the flurry of parental objection to the EC comics of the '50s.



Tales From The Crypt-Keeper was indeed watered down from the cable series and comic books which spawned it. Plans to film live, book-end segments with the Crypt-Keeper were scrapped as too scary; the now-animated host was more apt to wear Bermuda shorts and bunny slippers than a live rat coat. John Kassir still provided the voice, though

violence-oriented puns were toned down.

The series bible (by *Dr. Giggles* and *Crypt* director Manny Coto) notes that "there are no knives, guns or 'realistic' violence. No dripping blood or gore ... In addition, demonic overtones are avoided. ... No black magic or Satanic rituals." Interestingly enough, the next sentence explained, "Religious symbols are avoided as well."

Despite—or maybe because of—the controversy, *Tales from the Crypt-Keeper* became something of a hit (The equally gloomy/silly *Addams Family* cartoon, oddly enough, didn't last), and EC's oldest horror host seemed to have a profitable new gig. The series was very popular overseas, and ABC made it one of its first renewals for the fall 1994 season. A toy line soon followed.

The show went through several changes with its second season. The Crypt Keeper gained two rivals, The Old Witch and The Vault Keeper, who competed each week to tell their "deadtime stories" to the kiddies. Their rivalry created a much sillier atmosphere. The revamp didn't seem to hurt or help the series, which remained a solid success.

The FOX network, perhaps regretting its earlier decision not to go with *Two-Fisted Tales*, picked up the syndication rights to *Tales from the Crypt*. Many episodes had been shot with slightly different footage—no nudity, less gore, no swearing—for later syndication broadcast. FOX premiered the series Jan. 22, 1994, airing it several times a week, to strong ratings.

Meanwhile HBO had relented, and had decided to bring back their most successful series ever. Production began on the sixth season of *Crypt* in early 1994. Unfortunately, by this season, many of the stars didn't come out. A few who did included Catherine O'Hara, stand-up comics Rita Rudner and Richard Lewis, William Sadler (appearance number two), Terry O'Quinn, Wayne Newton, Corey Feldman, country star Travis Tritt and Miguel Ferrer (yes, again, for appearance three).

In what HBO promised as the "final" *Crypt* episode, director Robert Zemeckis returned to the series to helm "You, Murderer," a noirish crime drama starring John Lithgow, Isabella Rossellini and Humphrey Bogart. Wait a second! Isn't Bogie dead? Yes, well, the Crypt-Keeper's supposed to be dead too. Bogart was brought back through the use of film clips and computer-generated imagery (CGI) effects, similar to the ones Zemeckis had used in his big hit *Forrest Gump*. "You, Murderer" was also the subject of an HBO behind-the-scenes documentary in



was used instead as the final issue of *Tales from the Crypt*.

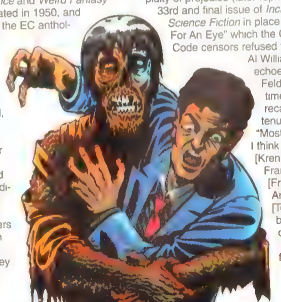
Gaines and Feldstein had hit it off instantly and their closeness eventually enabled them to adopt a unique working relationship. Gaines, who'd always been heavy, was constantly using Dexedrine to suppress his appetite and as a natural result, had trouble sleeping at night. So Gaines would stay up for most of the night reading voraciously and making thumbnail story notes he called springboards. In the morning, Gaines would come in with a stack of springboards and try to sell Feldstein on one of his ideas. Because of the small size of EC's editorial staff—consisting of Gaines, Feldstein, Harvey Kurtzman and Johnny Craig—Gaines and Feldstein were writing most of the stories in seven of EC's nine titles. Their publishing schedule meant coming up with four plots every week.

Weird Science and *Weird Fantasy* were inaugurated in 1950, and both followed the EC anthology format of four stories per issue illustrated by different artists, usually Wood, Kamen, Williamson, Orlando, later Bernard Krigstein, and sometimes editor Feldstein, whose unforgettable covers were his own favorite work for EC. Harvey Kurtzman even wrote and drew a handful of offbeat, well-plotted stories for the early issues. Unlike the competing sci-fi titles, EC stories were *not* space operas, as Feldstein remembered in a recent interview: "We got into some formulized plots that we did, like what we called 'the preaches,' which were poetic justice kind of things: You step on a cockroach and a cockroach steps on you.... We had interesting science-fiction plots where space explorers would end up in zoos ... We just tried everything. We *really* had a wonderful time doing all this stuff."

One of Feldstein's favorites was "My World" (*Weird Science* #22), a visual odyssey through the imagination of premiere science-fiction artist Wallace Wood. Feldstein calls this story "a science-fiction *piece de resistance*." He also cited "Judgment Day" (*Weird Fantasy* #18), a parable about the stupidity of prejudice (later reprinted in 33rd and final issue of *Incredible Science Fiction* in place of "An Eye For An Eye" which the Comics Code censors refused to pass).

Al Williamson echoed Feldstein's sentiments when recalling his tenure at EC. "Most of it— and I think Roy [Krenkel] and Frank [Frazetta] and Angelo [Torres] will back me up on this— was done for the fun of it. We knew EC was doing some interesting stuff, above the average comic book stuff.... It wasn't just a job where a guy took it and inked it and collected his money, it was a job where Angelo, Roy, Frank and myself sat down and we loved what we were doing."

EC's house ads boasted that "EC is proudest of its science-fiction magazines," and while Al Feldstein maintained that the science-fiction titles "did not lose money," Gaines was forced to combine *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy* into a single title, *Weird Science-Fantasy* at the end of 1953. The cover price for *Weird S-F* was raised to the standard 10 cents. *The Smithsonian Book of Comic-Book Comics* reprinted five EC stories, noting that "The science-fiction books did not sell well, but William Gaines kept them alive with the profits from the horror comics—a rare and unique instance of a publisher's supporting comic books because he cared about them."



Crime SuspenStories and *Shock SuspenStories*, a duo of snap-ending titles, appeared with the horror and SF comics. The comics featured stories of crime, suspense, revenge, even the social commentaries that avowed liberal Feldstein referred to as "Preachies." These were stories that dealt with specific issues such as racism, drug abuse, misguided patriotism and mob violence.

Shock was even more a mixed bag than *Crime*. Each issue contained one of Feldstein's "preachies," a science-fiction story, horror tale and a crime story. The covers were even more lurid than a rundown of each issue's contents might indicate. One of Feldstein's best covers (*Shock SuspenStories* #13) featured an agonized portrait of a junkie going through heroin withdrawal (with its drug paraphernalia accurately depicted in the foreground). Although "The Monkey" (well-illustrated by Joe Orlando) carried a strong anti-drug message, with a teenager going from pot and pills to mainlining heroin and eventually killing his father, Feldstein's powerful cover might have given pause to even the most liberal '50s parent.

Late in 1950, EC began Harvey Kurtzman's *Two-Fisted Tales*, which was quickly joined by *Frontline Combat*. *Tales* began as a straight adventure anthology, but with issue #19 writer/editor/artist Kurtzman began focusing on a then-current issue: the Korean War. From then on, until the war ended in 1953, both comics would increasingly focus on Korea.



"In my editing of the two EC war titles, first *Two-Fisted Tales* and then *Frontline Combat*, I didn't work with Gaines in the manner of Feldstein," Kurtzman recalled. "Instead, I combined Gaines' short-story principles with my heavily researched material for buttoned-down realism." Grinding hours of research paid off with *anti-war* stories that had the look, smells, sounds and feel of real combat. "I felt strongly about not wanting to glamorize war in *Frontline Combat* and *Two-Fisted Tales*."

Normally, the traditional war comic depicted American soldiers merrily and bare-handedly killing little gap-toothed yellow men with their rifle butts, and I thought that was a terrible disservice to the children who were reading those stories."

After writing his script and having Ben Oda hand-letter the boards (Kurtzman *hated* the Leroy lettering employed on all the other EC titles), Kurtzman would tape on tracing paper layouts showing the artists exactly where to place figures, equipment and how to pace the story-telling. But as good as his regular artists (Wood, Severin, Elder and Davis) were, Kurtzman was perhaps the best illustrator of his own scripts, as he



their *First Look* series.

Over the six years of its HBO run, *Crypt* won several of the coveted Cable ACE Awards, including awards in Writing, Direction of Photography and Original Score (1989), Best Dramatic Series, Directing and Direction of Photography (1990), Directing (1991), Best Actress (1992) and recently, Directing and Direction of Photography (1995).

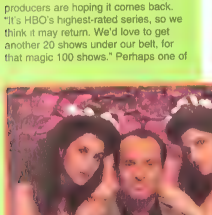
As if conquering television wasn't enough, the Crypt-Keeper and his producers announced in early 1994 their plans to produce a trilogy of bigger-budget single-story *Tales from the Crypt* films. First up was *Demon Knight*, which filmed in Los Angeles, directed by Ernest Dickerson (*Juice*). The cast included Billy Zane (as the main demon), William Sadler (as the main hero, and making his third *Crypt* appearance), startlingly good newcomer Jada Pinkett, Brenda Bakke, Charles Fleischer (the voice of Roger Rabbit), John Schuck, Thomas Church, genre legend Dick Miller and, of course, John Kassir as the cackling Crypt-Keeper. The plot told of a desert hotel under attack by a horde of demons.

Released on Friday, Jan. 13, 1995 *Demon Knight* garnered largely favorable reviews, although most critics made sure to express disapproval over the goner elements of the film.

So, after a complete career resurrection by HBO, six award-winning live-action seasons, two ratings-winning animated seasons, two CD music releases and a hit movie, what exactly does the future hold in store for the Crypt-Keeper? Jack Wohl, President of Tales from the Crypt Productions, promises some big things

Tales from the Crypt-Keeper seems a likely prospect for third season renewal. "ABC has ordered several special scripts already," he says, "including a *Halloween Special*." FOX will continue its package of network reruns, including special stunts like having the Crypt-Keeper host totteries and theme nights, like he did for Halloween and the *Demon Knight* premiere on Friday the 13th of January.

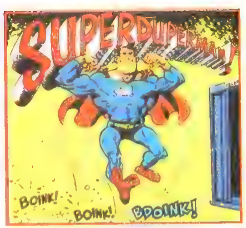
Although HBO has said that the sixth season was the final season of *Crypt*, producers are hoping it comes back. "It's HBO's highest-rated series, so we think it may return. We'd love to get another 20 shows under our belt, for that magic 100 shows." Perhaps one of



the episodes will be "Dying To Lose Weight," which was written, but never shot, for the sixth season.

The other two films in the *Crypt* feature trilogy are undecided at the moment. By late January, no decision had been made regarding scripts. At the very end of *Demon Knight* (you did stay until the end of the credits, didn't you?), the Crypt-Keeper promised his next shot would be *Dead Easy*, "coming soon." However, the second film, to be directed by Gil Adler, could be *Fat Tuesday*, set during a wild Mardi Gras (written by J.P. Kelly), the aforementioned *Dead Easy*, or a newcomer to the bunch, *Bordello Of Blood*. Filming will begin in late February or early March, for a possible Halloween delivery. Richard Donner is planning to direct the third film, which may be *Body Count* (erroneously reported elsewhere as *Dead Calm*).

Meanwhile, Wohl comments about a complete surprise series, expected to be announced at Toy Fair in mid-February. "We've got a series we're lining up licensors with now, called *Secrets* proved with a pair of Korean War classics: "Corpse on the Imjin" (*Tales* #25), a first-person story narrated by a *dead* Korean soldier and "Big If" (*Frontline* #5). "I'm proud of many of the stories in those two comic books," he said, "but if I were to single out one story as a strong example of what I want to do, it would be 'Big If'.... I think the story makes the reader feel the humanity of Private Paul Maynard. And when a story touches you with the humanity of its characters, it is really doing its job. I wish I had done more stories like 'If.'"



Kurtzman's hard work also had another side-effect: It slowed him down to the point that he could only write and edit two books to Feldstein's seven. Resentful of the disparity in their incomes, Kurtzman went to Gaines, who suggested that since the first samples Kurtzman had shown him were the humorous "Hey, Look! strips he had done for Timely, that he try a humor comic. While recovering from a case of jaundice (brought on in part by overwork), Kurtzman brainstormed *MAD*, which debuted in 1952. Inspired by the zany humor of college magazines, *MAD* began slowly, but soon found its direction. Issue #4's "Superduperman," beautifully illustrated by Wallace Wood, was a virtual template for what would become known as the "*MAD* style" of satire. After issue #4 *MAD*'s readership grew and grew, and its success would ultimately prove to be Bill Gaines' (if not EC's) salvation.



At a time when most comic artists labored in obscurity, prevented from even signing their work, EC was unique in that it regularly published photos and biographies of their artists on the inside front covers of their comics. EC's relationship with its fans was also unique. The editors ran long letters and bantered with the fans in their letters columns, creating a fiercely loyal following few comics companies have *ever* had. Gaines fostered this chumminess by publishing the EC Fan-Addict Club Bulletin, the in-house fan club eventually numbering over 9,000 members and played a pivotal role in inspiring modern comic fandom.

But aside from its fantastically talented artists, the thing that truly set EC apart was the irreverence and maturity of the scripts. At their best, EC scripts had literary overtones, and took the comics medium into new realms of visual storytelling. In addition to the dozens of great stories scripted by Kurtzman with his research and attention to detail, and the hundreds of stories concocted by Gaines and Feldstein in their daily plotting sessions, EC also directly adapted stories by such literary lights as Ray Bradbury, Guy DeMaupassant, Eando Binder (Earl and Otto Binder) and used countless ideas from writers like Damon Knight and Katherine Kurtz as the inspirations for their scripts.

But late in 1953 the glory days of EC were almost at an end. Anti-comics sentiments were on the rise across the country. The events of December, 1953, unsettling as they must have been to Bill Gaines, were only a taste of what was to come. *Panic*, edited by Al Feldstein as EC's answer to all the rip-off horror comics published in the wake of *MAD*'s success, debuted in December of '53 and immediately aroused an outcry for two stories. Authorities in Massachusetts took strong exception to Feldstein and Elder's "A Night Before Christmas," which left Clement Clark Moore's famous poem intact, but illustrated it with Elder's wacky, gag-crammed panels. One panel that particularly outraged the politicians and clergy showed the rear of Santa's sleigh, which bore a "Just Divorced" sign. What Feldstein and Elder (two Jews) and Gaines (their atheist publisher) forgot was that Santa was St. Nicolas, a Christian saint. Within weeks of its publication, *Panic* was banned in Massachusetts, and there was more in store. "My Gun Is The Jury," a Jack Davis/Al Feldstein parody of Mickey Spillane's tough guy, Mike Hammer, caused the New York City Police Department to come to the EC offices. After Gaines' business manager Lyle Stuart sold them a copy of *Panic* #1, he was arrested and charged with selling "disgusting" literature (a charge that could have netted Stuart a year in jail). Still, Al Feldstein's experience of putting out a *MAD*-style humor book was to stand him in good stead, as we shall see.

Piracy, an anthology featuring tales of pirates and other deep-sea yarns, began appearing around the same time as *Panic*, though it is often erroneously lumped in with the other "New Direction" books. In fact, *Piracy* and *Panic* were the very last of the "New Trend" comics.

The newspaper editorials and magazine articles condemning comics continued to swell into a virtual deluge of brickbats, many of them aimed at EC.

By the spring of '54, psychiatrist Frederic Wertham's book *Seduction of the Innocent* (which accused comics of inspiring juvenile delinquency and featured a choice sampling of EC covers and panels) was released. *Seduction* was one more reason that retailers were soon returning their unopened bundles of EC comics. Bill Gaines realized he'd have to do something quick or he'd be put out of business.

Hoping to deflect some of the criticism directed at EC, Gaines voluntarily appeared on April 21, 1954, before the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency. Unfortunately, Gaines' appearance before Senator Estes Kefauver, and investigators Herbert Hannoch and Herbert Beaser, though it started well, quickly became confrontational. Gaines was forced to defend EC Comics on the basis of good taste, and his horror and crime comics had provided his detractors with plenty of ammunition. Witness this excerpt from Gaines' testimony which was widely quoted in the newspapers and periodicals of the times as evidence of the comic industry's greed and immoral disregard of community standards:



Kefauver: "Here is your May issue [*Crime SuspenStories* #22]. This seems to be a man with a bloody ax holding a woman's head which has been severed from her body. Do you think that's in good taste?"

Gaines: "Yes, sir, I do—for the cover of a horror comic. A cover in bad taste, for example, might be defined as holding the head a little higher so that the blood could be seen dripping from it, and moving the body over a little farther so that the neck of the body could be seen to be bloody."

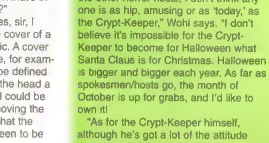
The hearings didn't bring forth any anti-comics legislation, but the damage had already been done. More and more retailers were refusing to handle horror comics. Gaines was in the unenviable position of almost single-handedly fighting the anti-comics forces. Even the companies that copied EC's horror titles did nothing to help. Gaines tried an end run around the critics by joining the other publishers to form an action group that would learn if there really was a link between comic book reading and



of the Crypt-Keeper's Haunted House. It'll be an adventure-game series, like some of the shows you see on Nickelodeon. The kids may be negotiating their way through the incredible shrinking room, or wading through puddles of slime!" Other plans include a major advertising campaign with a beer company, a line of greeting cards, a daily newspaper gag panel—"to help the gap left by the passing of *The Far Side*"—a coffee-table book about the series' history and all-new comic line adapting each of the HBO episodes.

"With all due respects to Elvira and the other horror hosts, I don't think anyone is as hip, amusing or as 'today,' as the Crypt-Keeper," Wohl says. "I don't believe it's impossible for the Crypt-Keeper to become for Halloween what Santa Claus is for Christmas. Halloween is bigger and bigger each year. As far as spokesmen/hosts go, the month of October is up for grabs, and I'd like to own it!

"As for the Crypt-Keeper himself, although he's got a lot of the attitude that comes with success, he knows that at any time, Hollywood can cut him off at the knees. Besides, he's been dead before." ▲



juvenile delinquency, and generate some positive publicity. Gaines' bold plan backfired when the nine other publishers who showed up voted to ban the words "Crime," "Horror" and "Terror" from comics. Gaines walked out of the meeting. Did Gaines feel he was being railroaded? Gaines only chuckled ruefully and replied, "I would say so, yes."

Finally, on Sept. 14, 1954, Gaines gave in to the chorus of criticism and folded his horror and crime titles. In *The Mad World of William M. Gaines*, he recalled, "I'd been told that if I continued publishing my magazines, no one would handle them. I had no choice." Two days after Gaines announced the cancellation of his horror and crime comics, the Comics Magazine Association of America was formed, with Judge Charles F. Murphy in charge of safe-guarding the morals of America's youth.

Around the same time Gaines and Feldstein tried their hand at creating a line of "clean, clean" EC Comics that would be acceptable to parents and retailers. In a break with EC tradition, some "New Direction" titles featured continuing characters, notably *Extra*, which chronicled the exploits of "special correspondent" Keith Michaels, tough-guy photographer Slick Rampart and glamorous reporter Gen Hamilton. Although *Extra* was a standout title artistically (containing some of Craig, Severin and Crandall's best EC work), the most interesting aspect of this comic was undoubtedly a story titled "Dateline Aleirs" *(Extra* #3), which Craig told as a text story illustrated with spot illos and comics panels. It foreshadowed EC's Adult Picto-Fiction titles, which were published following the demise of all the "New Direction" books. *Psychoanalysis*, another "New Direction" comic also featured a cast of continuing characters.

Psychoanalysis was real oddity for the comics industry, generated by Gaines and Feldstein's participation and interest in the newly fashionable field of psychotherapy. It also inspired EC's first venture into television, a failed pilot for a show titled *The Psychiatrist* (Feldstein got billing as co-writer).

One defining difference between EC and other companies had always been that the only superheroes of the EC lineup were two "Pre-Trend" characters: Moon Girl, a Wonder Woman imitator, and Blackstone, the Magic Detective. And, except for the horror hosts, the Crypt-Keeper, the Old Witch, the Vault-Keeper, and Drusilla, the Vault-Keeper's comely sidekick (who appeared in the last few issues of *Vault*), EC *never* dealt in continuing characters until the end of its days. Some noteworthy exceptions were *Weird Science*, where Eando Binder's famous Adam Link stories were adapted, and Kurtzman's war books, which featured a handful of text stories and comics scripts starring Sgt. Patrick Turbridy, Jerry DeFuccio's grizzled British non-com.



In the last year of its existence, the Korean War was over and *Two-Fisted* began concentrating on straight adventure stories, running the exploits of Ruby Ed Coffy (a wealthy adventurer who came on like a combination Doc Savage and Daddy Warbucks) and Texas John Slaughter, a two-fisted frontier marshal loosely based on a real lawman.

The other "New Direction" titles were *Valor* (historical adventure), *Aces High* (WW I flyers), and *Impact*, the last title specializing in the snap-ending stories that by now were EC's stock in trade. *Impact*'s premiere issue featured "Master Race," a classic of comics storytelling by writer Al Feldstein and artist Bernard Krigstein. Krigstein cut up the lettered illustration boards for Feldstein's six-page script and repasted it so he could tinker with the timing and visual storytelling of "Master Race"—to stunning effect.

The "New Direction" titles all featured stories and artwork by the EC staff at the top of their form. Yet, despite the excellent art and genuinely original concepts, all of them folded after five issues (*Psychoanalysis* only lasted four).

Gaines tried to avoid getting his "New Direction" comics approved by the newly formed Comics Code Authority, but it didn't work. Without the Code's white stamp displayed prominently on the covers, retailers refused to sell ECs. So, Gaines reluctantly submitted his comics to the Code for approval. His squabbles with the Code began almost immediately and would lead to his leaving comics altogether. Gaines was unprepared for the petty tyranny of the Code's censors, though just before the Code was adopted, the wholesalers had forced him to censor two horror covers) for *Vault of Horror* #32 and *Tales from the Crypt* #38). As Gaines noted years later, "You have to understand. [The CCA] was run by three or four old ladies who were shocked by almost anything. They were the ones who did the censoring. George Murphy ran it, but I don't think he read things. The staff of old ladies read it, and it wasn't hard to shock them."

The censors refused to pass "An Eye For An Eye," then refused Gaines' replacement "Judgement Day," specifically asking that the sweat drops on the black astronaut's brow in the final panel be removed before they would approve it. Gaines refused and told the Comics Code Authority he would sue them if they refused to approve the story, then printed it anyway. Gaines knew he had nothing to lose: *Incredible Science Fiction* #33 was the last color comic book he would ever publish.

In 1955, after Kurtzman was offered a position as *Pageant* editor Harris Shevelson's right-hand man, Gaines countered by offering Kurtzman the chance to realize a cherished dream: doing a "slick" magazine. Allowing Kurtzman to transform *Mad* from comic to a magazine had the added benefit of putting it beyond the reach of the comics industry's censors

Fortunately for Bill Gaines, *MAD* magazine, which debuted in the summer of 1955, was a howling success. Buoyed by *MAD*'s triumph, and hopeful that they could duplicate it, Gaines and Feldstein created the Adult Picto-Fiction titles: *Crime Illustrated*, *Terror Illustrated*, *Shock Illustrated* and *Confessions Illustrated*. In an economy and time-saving measure, Feldstein used old comic plots and rewrote them into text stories that were then typeset to give the magazines a more "adult" look and were illustrated with caption and balloon-less drawings by EC's regular artists. Interestingly enough, the name Alfred E. Neuman, later to become famous as the moniker of *MAD*'s freckle-faced mascot, first appeared in the Picto-Fiction titles as a pseudonym for Al Feldstein.

It's fascinating to contemplate the effect the Picto-Fiction *might* have had on American comics had they succeeded. But, alas, American comics readers weren't ready, and all four titles were cancelled after two issues. There was actually a third issue of *Shock Illustrated* printed, though its print run was only a few hundred copies. The unstapled signatures were brought to the EC offices and hand-stapled by some of the EC staff. They weren't even distributed, but given away to friends, with a handful sold on a few newsstands within walking distance of the EC offices.

Gaines reportedly knew that the Picto-Fiction titles were bombs but didn't have the heart to cancel them until after Christmas of 1955 Gaines had everyone complete the art and stories they were working on, then with great reluctance, early in 1956 Gaines let everyone except Kurtzman and his *MAD* staffers go, including Al Feldstein, though he wouldn't be gone for long.

Feldstein hit the freelance trail, writing scripts for Timely and working up dummies of magazine concepts—one of which was, according to Feldstein, "a little more sophisticated than *MAD*" with its major drawing card being work by the latest wave of hip, young '50s comedians like Shelly Berman, Bob Newhart. Bob and Ray, Ernie Kovacs, Nichols and May and even Lenny Bruce, "if I could keep him clean," Feldstein noted

Kurtzman, meanwhile, had successfully shepherded his brainchild from the world of comics into the magazine arena. The first issue of *MAD* magazine (#24) contained "An Important Message From Our Editors," and showed a group of people on their knees imploring the reader to buy the magazine. It took off like a shot, and it seemed like clear sailing was ahead. Then, five issues into the new magazine, Kurtzman, afraid of losing creative control, demanded a 51-percent share of the magazine. Bill Gaines, shocked at Kurtzman's sudden demand, offered him 10 percent. Kurtzman refused. Thereupon, Bill Gaines told him to go to hell and was left wondering what to do with *MAD*. Both Lyle Stuart and Gaines' wife offered identical advice: get Al Feldstein. Thus began a New *MAD* Era.

Kurtzman went on to a dream deal: carte blanche from Playboy's Hugh Hefner to do an ultra-slick adult humor magazine called *Trump*, taking most of *Mad*'s freelancers, including Elder, Davis and Wood. Hefner unceremoniously pulled the plug on the lavishly



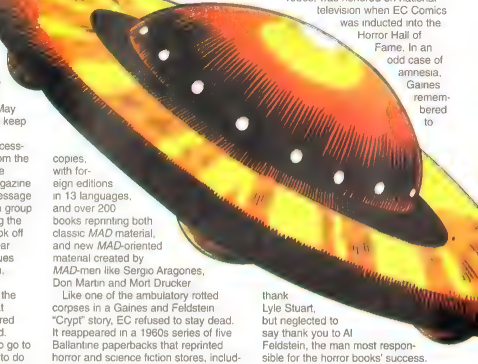
produced *Trump* after only two issues, and Kurtzman was cut adrift.

Back at *MAD*, Feldstein had his work cut out for him Kurtzman's abrupt departure had left him with only about half an issue worth of material. Utilizing that, and some new material written by himself and Assistant Editor Jerry DeFuccio, Feldstein put that issue to bed. But then he was left with a new dilemma: how to keep publishing a magazine that had raided the fifties but never saw print. Cochran also began reprinting every EC comic in color

EC may never die. Each year brings new EC derived projects, such as Phantomb Publishing's series of color and black and white prints by Craig, Evans, Kamen and Feldstein

In 1991, in what must have felt like a vindication of sorts, Bill Gaines, the Peck's Bad Boy of Comics in the 1950s. was honored on national television when EC Comics was inducted into the Horror Hall of Fame. In an odd case of amnesia, Gaines remembered to thank Lyle Stuart, but neglected to say thank you to Al Feldstein, the man most responsible for the horror books' success.

Sadly, Kurtzman, Wood, Ingels, Crandall, Oda and Gaines have gone to their rewards. However, Al Feldstein has re-emerged from his retirement, and at the 1994 San Diego ComiCon he received a Lifetime Achievement Award for his work on EC and *MAD*. And EC Comics keep shambling on—the comics too good to die! ▲



produced *Trump* after only two issues, and Kurtzman was cut adrift.

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COMICS AND CARDS PRICE GUIDE

Introduction

TITLE
PUBLISHER (Date)
† Artists' Whose we info on comic
Info on the comic
† Special edition
† 2nd Print
TPB (Trade Paperback)
New Series (Date)
1-2's
One-shot comic
Limited Series, Name of Ltd. Series (Date)
1-4 Price 0 00

ACES HIGH
EC Comics (1955)

1-2	75 00
3-5	50.00

ANIMAL FABLES
EC Comics (1946-1947)

1	200 00
2	125 00
3-6	100 00
7	Moon Girl App 300 00

BLACKSTONE, THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE FIGHTS CRIME
EC Comics (1947)
1 1st App Happy Houlihans 200 00

CONFESSIONS ILLUSTRATED
EC Comics (1956)

1	65.00
	J Craig/ W Wood,J Orlando-a
2	65.00
	J Craig/ R Crandall,J Orlando-a

CRIME ILLUSTRATED
EC Comics (1955-1956)

1-2	50.00
	R Crandall -G Ingels-a,J Orlando-a
	Magazine size

CRIME PATROL
EC Comics (1948-1950)

7	Modok-a 300.00
	Formerly *International Crime Patrol*
8-14	250 00
15	1st App The Crypt Keeper 1000 00
16	2nd App The Crypt Keeper 800 00

CRIME SUSPENSTORIES
EC Comics (1950-1955)

15	J Craig-a starts 700 00
	Was going to be from *Vault of Horror* but it was decided to continue numbering
1	Kurtzman,W Wood-a 500 00
	Numbering starts again
2	300 00
3	W Wood-a 200 00
4-5	200 00
6-10	150 00
11-12	100 00
13	A Williamson-a
14	100 00
15	The Old Witch App 100 00
16	A Williamson-a 100 00
17	F Frazetta A Williamson-a 150 00
18-19	R.Crandall 100 00
20	R Crandall 150 00



21	75.00
22	R Crandall-a,J Craig-a ends 100 00
23	R Crandall-a 100 00
24-26	R Crandall-a 75.00
27	75.00

CRIME SUSPENSTORIES
Russ Cochran (1992-Present)

1-3	Reprints 1.50
4-5	2.00

THE CRYPT OF TERROR
EC Comics (1950)

17	J.Craig,Feldstein-a 1000.00
	Formerly *Crime Patrol*
18	800.00
	J Craig,H Kurtzman,W Wood-a
19	J Craig,G Ingels-a 800.00

EXTRA
EC Comics (1953)

1	100.00
	J Craig,R Crandall,J Severin-a in all
2-5	50.00

FAT & SLAT
EC Comics (1947-1948)

1	150.00
2-4	100.00

FRONTLINE COMBAT
EC Comics (1951-1953)

1	H Kurtzman W Wood-a 350 00
2	H Kurtzman W Wood-a 200 00
3-4	H Kurtzman W Wood-a 150 00
5	H Kurtzman-a 100 00
6-10	W Wood-a 100 00
11-15	75.00

GUNFIGHTER
EC Comics (1948-1950)

5-6	250 00
7-14	150.00
	Formerly *Fat & Slat*

HAPPY HOULIHANS
EC Comics (1947)

1	200.00
2	100.00

HAUNT OF FEAR
EC Comics (1950-1954)

15(1)	J.Craig-a 1300.00
	Formerly *Gunfighter*, W Wood-a starts
16(2)	J.Craig 650.00
17(3)	J.Craig 650.00
	Origin of Crypt of Terror, Vault of Horror and Haunt of Fear
4	400.00
5	J.Craig 300.00
6-7	J Craig-a, W Wood-a ends 275 00
8	200.00
9	J.Craig-a 200.00
10	200.00
11-13	150.00
14	200.00
15-18	150.00
19	200.00
20-28	100.00



11	Wolverine app. 300.00
12	200.00
13-14	200.00
15	150.00
16-20	150.00
21	1st App. Alfred E. Neuman 150.00
22-23	150.00
24	1st Magazine 500.00
24	2nd print
25	200.00
26-27	150.00
28	3 different versions of cover 150 00
29	Kamden,D Martin-a 150 00
30	R Crandall-a, Elvis spoof 200 00
31	100.00
32	M.Drucker-a 100.00
33-34	100.00
35	R.Crandall-a 100.00
36-44	50.00
45	W Wood-a ends 50.00
46-58	50.00
59	W.Wood-a 50.00
60	50.00
61-70	30.00
71-75	25.00
76	S.Aragones-a 25.00
77-80	25.00
81-89	25.00
90	Beatles App. 25.00
91-104	15.00
105	Batman TV show parody 20.00
106-120	15.00
121-170	10.00
171-200	5.00
201-300	2.00
300-303	Special ed. 3.00
	Only distributed to troops in Kuwait
304-333	2.00

HAUNT OF FEAR
Russ Cochran (1991-1992)

1	Reprints 2.50
2-5	2.00
	2nd Series (1992-Present)
1-3	Reprints 2.00
4-5	2.00
	TPB Vol 1 Issues 1-5 9.00

IMPACT
EC Comics (1955)

1	R Crandall,G Evans-a 75 00
	G Ingels-a -n all
2-3	R Crandall-a
4	R Crandall G Evans-a
5	50.00

INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION
EC Comics (1955-1956)

30	A.Williamson-a 150.00
	W Wood-a in all
	Formerly *Weird Science-Fantasy*, Reprint *Weird Fantasy* 18
31	A Williamson-a 200.00
32	A.Williamson-a 200.00
33	Reprint *Weird Fantasy* 18 150.00

INTERNATIONAL COMICS
EC Comics (1947)

1	300.00
2-5	200.00

INTERNATIONAL CRIME PATROL
EC Comics (1948)

6	350.00
	Formerly *International Comics*

MAD
EC Comics (1952-Present)

1	W Wood-a starts 2500.00
2	600.00
3-4	400.00
5	600.00
6-10	300.00



11	Wolverine app. 300.00
12	200.00
13-14	200.00
15	150.00
16-20	150.00
21	1st App. Alfred E. Neuman 150.00
22-23	150.00
24	1st Magazine 500.00
24	2nd print
25	200.00
26-27	150.00
28	3 different versions of cover 150 00
29	Kamden,D Martin-a 150 00
30	R Crandall-a, Elvis spoof 200 00
31	100.00
32	M.Drucker-a 100.00
33-34	100.00
35	R.Crandall-a 100.00
36-44	50.00
45	W Wood-a ends 50.00
46-58	50.00
59	W.Wood-a 50.00
60	50.00
61-70	30.00
71-75	25.00
76	S.Aragones-a 25.00
77-80	25.00
81-89	25.00
90	Beatles App. 25.00
91-104	15.00
105	Batman TV show parody 20.00
106-120	15.00
121-170	10.00
171-200	5.00
201-300	2.00
300-303	Special ed. 3.00
	Only distributed to troops in Kuwait
304-333	2.00

MD
EC Comics (1955)

1-5	50.00
	J Craig,R.Crandall,G Evans,G Ingels, J Orlando-a

A MOON, A GIRL ... ROMANCE
EC Comics (1949-1950)

9	400.00
	Formerly *Moon Girl*
10-11	W Wood-a 350.00
12	400.00

MOON GIRL
EC Comics (1947-1949)

1	500.00
	First named *Moon Girl and the Prince*
2-4	250.00
5	1st EC horror story 500.00
6	275.00
7-8	275.00
	Named *Moon Girl Fights Crime*

PANIC
EC Comics (1954-1955)

1	Elder-a 100.00
2-4	W Wood-a 50.00
5-11	50.00
12	W Wood-a 50.00

PICTURE STORIES
EC Comics
From American History (1945-1947)

1	100.00
2-4	75.00
	From the Bible (1946)
1-2	Old Testament 75.00
1-3	New Testament 75.00
	Complete New Testament 100.00
	1-3 in one book
	From Science (1947)
1-2	100.00
	From World History (1947)
1-2	100.00

PIRACY
EC Comics (1954-1955)

1	A Williamson-a W Wood-a 150.00
	R.Crandall a in all
2	A Williamson W Wood-a 100.00
3-7	75.00

PSYCHOANALYSIS
EC Comics (1955)

1-4	Kamen-a 75.00

SADDLE JUSTICE
EC Comics (1948-1949)

3	J.Craig-a 200.00
	Formerly *Happy Houlihans*
4	J.Craig-a,1st G Ingels EC art 200 00
5-8	G Ingels-a 200.00

SADDLE ROMANCES
EC Comics (1949-1950)

9	200.00
	Formerly *Saddle Justice*
10	1st W Wood EC art 250.00
11	G Ingels-a 200.00

SHOCK ILLUSTRATED
EC Comics (1955-1956)

1	Kamen-a/w 50.00
	Magazine size
2	A Williamson-a 30.00
3	500.00
	Only 100 copies known to exist

SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES
EC Comics (1952-1955)

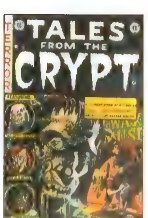
1	Ray Bradbury adaptation 400.00
2	W Wood-a starts 200.00
3-7	150.00
8	A Williamson-a 150.00
9	125.00
10	125.00
11	J.Craig-a 125.00
12	150.00
13	F.Frazetta-a 200.00
15	W Wood-a ends 100.00
16-18	100.00

SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES
Russ Cochran (1992-Present)

1-2	Reprints 1.50
3-5	2.00
	TPB Vol 1-2 Issues 1-10 10.00

TALES FROM THE CRYPT
EC Comics (1950-1955)

20	J.Craig-a 600.00
	Formerly *The Crypt of Terror*
21	H Kurtzman W Wood-a 500.00
22	J.Craig-a 400.00
23	J.Craig-a 300.00
24	J Craig-a E A Poe adaptation 300 00
25	W Wood-a 250.00
26-27	W Wood-a 250.00
28-30	250.00
31	W Williamson-a 250.00
32	250.00
33	Origin of The Crypt Keeper 350.00
34	Ray Bradbury adaptation 250.00
35	250.00
36	Ray Bradbury adaptation 200.00
37	200.00
38	Crandall-a 200.00
39	200.00
40	200.00
41	200.00
42	Crandall-a 200.00
43	200.00
44	200.00
45	200.00
46	250.00



TALES FROM THE CRYPT
Gladstone (1990-1991)

1-6	2.00

TALES FROM THE CRYPT
Russ Cochran (1992-Present)

1-4	Reprints 1.50
5	2.00

TERROR ILLUSTRATED
EC Comics (1955-1956)

1	Adult Entertainment 50.00
	J Craig,G Evans,G Ingels
	J Orlando-a in all magazine size
2	C Sultan-a 50.00

THREE DIMENSIONAL TALES FROM THE CRYPT
EC Comics (1954)

1	500.00
	Called *Three Dimensional EC Classics*
2	500.00

TOY TOT COMICS
EC Comics (1946-1947)

1	150.00
2	100.00
3-10	75.00

TWO-FISTED TALES
EC Comics (1950-1955)

18	500.00
	Formerly *Haunt of Fear*
19	350.00
20	200.00
21-25	150.00
26-32	100.00
33	W.Wood-a 100.00
34-36	100.00
37-41	50.00
Annual 1	500.00
Annual 2	300.00

TWO FISTED TALES
Russ Cochran (1992-Present)

1-4	Reprints 1.50
Annual 1-2	2.00

VALOR
EC Comics (1955)

1-2	A Williamson W Wood-a 150 00
3	A Williamson-a 100.00
4	100.00
5	W.Wood-a 100.00

VAULT OF HORROR
EC Comics (1950-1954)

12	Scarce J.Craig-a in all 2000.00
	Formerly *War Against Crime*
13	W Wood-a 600.00
14	W Wood-a 500.00
15	400.00
16	300.00
17-19	200.00
20-26	150.00
36	125.00
37	A Williamson-a 125.00
	1st App: Drusilla
38-39	100.00
40	125.00

VAULT OF HORROR, THE
Gladstone (1990-1991)

1-6	Reprints 2.00

VAULT OF HORROR
Russ Cochran (1991-1992)

1-5	2.00
	2nd Series (1992-Present)
1-4	1.50
Annual 1-2	10.00
TPB Vol 1	Issues 1-5 9.00

WEB BRADLEY CRIME
EC Comics (1948-1950)

1	325.00
2-9	200.00
10	1st App. Vault Keeper 1000 00
	1st Vault of Horror
11	Vault Keeper App 500.00

WEIRD FANTASY
EC Comics (1950-1953)

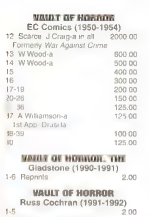
13(1)	W Wood a starts 600 00
14(2)	350.00
15-17(3-5)	300.00
6-10	200.00
11-13	150.00
14	F Frazetta A Williamson a 250 00
	W Wood-a ends
15-19	A Williamson-a 150.00
20	F Frazetta A Williamson-a 150.00
21	250.00
	F Frazetta A Wrikamson cover
22	Ray Bradbury adaptation 100.00

WEIRD FANTASY
Russ Cochran (1992-Present)

1-2	Reprints 1.50
3-5	2.00
Annual 1-2	10.00

WEIRD SCIENCE
EC Comics (1950-1953)

12(1)	H Kurtzman-a starts 700 00
	W Wood-a
	Formerly *Saddle Romances*
13(2)	W Wood-a 400.00
14(3)	300.00
15(4)	300.00
5	W Wood-a
6	H Kurtzman-a ends 200.00
7	200.00
8	W Wood-a 200.00
10	200.00



11-13	150.00
14	W Wood-a starts 150.00
15-18	A Williamson-a starts 150.00
19-20	F Frazetta-a 200.00
21-22	F Frazetta-a 200 00

WEIRD SCIENCE
Gladstone (1990-1991)

1-4	Reprints 2.00

WEIRD SCIENCE
Russ Cochran (1992-Present)

1-2	Reprints 1.50
3-5	2.00
	TPB Vol 1-2 Issues 1-10 10.00

WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY
EC Comics (1954-1955)

23	A.Williamson-a 150 00
	W Wood-a in all
	Ray Bradbury adaptation
24	A.Williamson-a 150.00
	1st Harlan Ellison story
25	A Williamson-a 150.00
	Ray Bradbury adaptation
26-27	150.00
28	200.00
29	F.Frazetta cove 300.00
Annual 1952	800.00
Annual 1953	500.00

WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY
Russ Cochran (1992-Present)

1-2	Reprints 1.50
3-5	2.00

CARDS

TALES FROM THE CRYPT
Cardz 1993

Set (110)	15.00
Single	0.15
Hologram Set (3)	20.00
Single	7.00
TekChrome Single (1)	10.00

TOYS

TALES FROM THE CRYPT-KEEPER

Crypt-Keeper in lux	Retail
Crypt-Keeper in robe	Retail
Frankenstein	Retail
Gargoyle	Retail
Mummy	Retail
Vampire w/cape	Retail
Werewolf	Retail
Zombie	Retail

TALKING CRYPT-KEEPER

Crypt-Keeper in lux	Retail
Crypt-Keeper in	Retail
Hawaiian outfit	

MULTIMEDIA

TALES FROM THE CRYPT: ORIGINAL MUSIC FROM
Tape and CD, 13 Tracks
(Oct 12 1992, Big Screen Records, 47 min)

TALES FROM THE CRYPT: HAVE YOURSELF A SCARY LITTLE CHRISTMAS
Tape and CD, 15 Tracks
(1994, The Right Stuff/Capitol, 35 mins.)

TALES FROM THE CRYPT-KEEPER
Video tapes (Sony Wonder, 45 mins.)
Vol. I: Where The Cat's Away/Nature (1994)
Vol. II: Gorilla's Paw/This Wraps It Up (1994)
Vol. III: Hyde and Go Shriek/The Sleeping Beauty Jam (1995)
Vol. IV: Fare Trip/Cave Man (Jan 1995)

TALES FROM THE CRYPT
Video tapes (Warner Home Video, 90 mins.)
Vol. I: The Man Who Was Death/And All Through the House / Dig That Cat He's Real Gone (1989)
Vol. II: Only Sin Deep/Lover Come Back To Me/Collection Completed (1990)
Vol. III: Dead Right/The Switch/Cutting Cards (1992)

MARKETS

NAVIGATING THE STORMY SEAS OF COMICS

by John Benton



THE VIEW FROM THE NEXUS

A FIRESIDE CHAT WITH ARTIST/EXECUTIVE/PUBLISHER LARRY MARDER ABOUT THE BIG ISSUES IN COMICS

Before he became executive director of Image Comics, Larry Marder was best known as creator of Tales of The Beanworld *(see page 53)* and as *"The Nexus of All Comic Book Realities."* Marder has been one of the keenest observers of the comics field, and he struck HERO as the perfect guy with whom to discuss many of the concerns readers have brought to our attention. We jumped right into it with a topic a lot of people are talking about: price.



BOOK OF THE MONTH

I don't see price as being the bugaboo that a lot of people do. I've said that the price of electronic entertainment has come down so low that it is not competitive with comic book entertainment. When the price of renting a video game is identical to the price of a couple comics, renting a video game is probably a bigger entertainment value than comics. Therefore, people assume that the price of comics is too high. What I'm saying is that the price of rival entertainment forms has come down, and it will come down even further, as comics will probably continue to get more expensive. The other thing is that besides the advent of "Image-style" coloring, there haven't been any technological advances in comics. Video games become more sophisticated and more lifelike every time a new one comes out. Our competition is not standing still; we are. I'm afraid that comics are at the same point that the radio drama was in the late '40s, in the face of television. A superior form of entertainment has been presented to the American public, and the American public has responded to it. I don't mean superior in quality, I just mean superior in ... what a kid wants out of comic books is to fulfill his fantasies. Reading an issue of a comic is not a superior experience to popping in that cartridge and beating the shit out of your best friend!

Recently, there's been a lot of attention focused on the ratio of cost-to-entertainment time, and comics seem to get the short end of the stick.

I think there is nothing that talks about the resonance of entertainment after the process is over. There is no question that a video game is a great value, but when it's over, it's over. But a *good* comic book, to a fan who loves that comic book and reads that comic book and thinks about it for the rest of the day, maybe the rest of the week, in some cases the rest of their life ... The price of admission isn't cheap, but retailers are ignoring a lot of that resonance. The only guy who gets anything out of that resonance is that fan. That is a *huge* part of the equation.

You can't ignore the fact that creators are making more and more money and demanding more and more money as a result.

Is that having an impact? I suppose it is, in the same way that salaries effect all forms of entertainment. The reason you pay $7 to go to a movie is because people are getting $5 million to be in a movie, the argument being that the actor—or [in the case of comics] the creator—actually does the work upon which it is all built. If you have a star who is creating work and he's generating millions of dollars, it is only fair that the creator reap the benefits of his labor. We had a very, very unfair system for a very long period of time, where people were getting a very low page rate and very low royalties. As creators were given a bigger piece of the pie, they began to realize the fact that they could probably own that majority of the pie.

How do you decide on the cover price for a book for Image? Or Tales of the Beanworld? *Or are those two different processes?*

Image basically has two price structures: $1.95 and $2.50. As the price of paper went up, we started making comics $2.50. The cost of paper, the cost of talent, production costs, the price of advertising—all of those things have increased. We jumped ahead of the curve and have really stuck our feet in the ground at $2.50, and we're not going to budge.

As far as *Beanworld* goes, there's some sort of agreement right now that black-and-white comics are $2.50 or $2.95. You basically go out and find the printer that you're going to have print your stuff, then you decide how much money you need to make off that particular book. I think when you're speaking of 'alternative' books, they come out so irregularly, and it's such a treat to the reader, that they'll pay anything for it because it's worth it to them.



BUZZ BOOK

The corollary to 'The books cost too much' is 'There are too many of them.'

I think that is a more valid argument. I don't know who is to determine who has too many titles. This is capitalism. All you have to do to get into the comic book industry is raise enough money to print a comic and solicit it, and you're in business. I think what you've got here is older, earlier thinking that in order to be a good comic store you have to carry everything. Shoe stores don't carry every kind of shoe that comes out. If you're looking for a specific kind of shoe, you go to a specific kind of store. Maybe that's what we're heading toward. I don't know if we can change our thinking as an industry quickly enough to do that. I don't see what the alternative to too many titles is. I don't see how you can ask somebody to cancel a comic that's still worth their effort.

But what do you say, then, to a comic fan collecting, for example, Jim Lee's books? They are very tightly plotted, which is great if you're buying all of Jim Lee's books. But if you're just buying Gen13*, you don't really know what's going on unless you're also buying* Stormwatch. *It almost seems like continuity is a marketing trap.*

I think it's funny that as an industry we've reached that point. When comics were completely disjointed and there was no continuity, readers complained that nothing seemed real, that things didn't hold together. A year ago we were being criticized that the Image Universe had no continuity, that you could read one book and it would have no relevance whatsoever to the other books. The fact that the books all tie together is a response to the criticism of the past. This has always been a problem with this sort of crossover book, tightly-scripted, interweaving continuity, that it was demanding too much of the fan. But to accuse that of being a captivating marketing tool, I think that's putting the wrong spin on it.

You mention the industry being cyclical, but it seems like you'll never be able to satisfy people.

Comics has always been kind of a private gripe club. When comics were dirt cheap, in the '70s when they went from metal to plastic [printing] plates and in the '80s when they began the Flexographic printing and all that kind of stuff, fandom was appalled at how crummy these comics looked. So what you had was a response by the independents by getting out of the flat coloring and getting more into the blue-line painted color. They started publishing books in what became known as 'Prestige Format,' these really fancy books that cost five bucks. Then you had everybody getting into 'Prestige Format.' We went through a cycle, and then people said, 'Hey, there's too much of this stuff.' So people started backing off and returned to regular comics, with the cheaper printing and the cheaper coloring. But there's something that's being left out of the equation, and that was that the 'Prestige Format' books were becoming more and more mundane-looking, and the talent that was contributing to them wasn't putting any extra effort into it. What you had was guys like Todd McFarlane on the regular books, and these guys were putting everything they had into it. So the excitement transferred to the cheaper comics, and the people who were doing their stuff on cheaper comics decided that they wanted to do their stuff on better material. Price isn't the only factor.

Next month: Where the industry may go next and whether superheroes are unleaded or hi-test. ▲

BOOK OF THE MONTH:

Code Name: Stryke Force #8, IMAGE/TOP COW
(Silvestri/Heisler/Benitez/Sowd)

Leave it to the Image boys to try and outdo each other once again! First Extreme variant covers, then WildStorm variant covers that formed a giant poster. Now Top Cow releases variant posters that form a giant poster!

Bound into the center of each issue of *CN:SF* was one of three posters—Billy Tan's Tempest, Bill Tucci's Cyblade or Marc Silvestri's Shi. If you had all three, you could lay them side-by-side into one large poster of all three ladies. Here's the catch: Nobody knew this was coming out until the actual issue hit the stands! As a result, fans have been scurrying to get the other posters.

Once again, this drives home the value of surprises. If Top Cow had solicited with the posters, odds are retailers would have ordered many more copies and they'd be sitting on the stands.

This issue features the debut of artist Joe Benitez, who will soon be on *Weapon Zero*. Quite a sendoff!

BUZZ BOOK:

Atomic City Tales, BLACK EYE PRESS
(Jason Stephens)

Take a hero who got his (nearly) all-encompassing powers from a freak meditating accident, give him a girlfriend who puts her own impressive powers to work for the hero's archenemy, throw in a couple of sidekicks (or "pals" as some of the old-fashioned comic fans might say) and top it off with a cartoonist who tags along for the ride. The result has inspired comparisons to Mike Allred's *Madman*, largely because both Mike Allred and Jay Stephens have impeccable taste where influences are concerned. In fact, if comparisons are even necessary, *Atomic City* feels a little like Bob Burden's freewheeling *Flaming Carrot* mixed with the classic 1960s *Doom Patrol*, with a few sequences that call to mind *The Wizard of Oz* as directed by the Fleischer Brothers. Fans of Stephens' late, lamented, brilliant *Sin* will be happy to know that Stephens has found a new genre to call his home—at least for now—and it fits him pretty well.

COMING

HERO ILLUSTRATED

Our Cover Feature:
IT'S MASKTABULOUS! IT'S MASKERIFFIC! It's A Look At THE MASK And His Up-Coming Television Cartoon Antics!! PLUS: *HERO* Reveals The Future Of Vertigo And Why They've Called In A *Preacher*. A Special Expanded *Meanwhile* Section Celebrates TOY FAIR! What's New With TEKNO And What NEIL GAIMAN Has To Do With It. MARK SCHULTZ and AL WILLIAMSON On FLASH GORDON! THE *HERO* FILES' Special Look at Disney's Classic Ducks! Hey now, hey now, COMICO's Back! ALL THIS AND MUCH MORE! Be There.



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HHIC0

FINALLY

COMMENTARY BY JEFF SMITH

How much is a comic book worth?

A lot of comic book specialty stores have gone out of business in the last year and a half.

For those of us who work in comics, the comic book business is changing. And it's changing fast. Most of these changes won't affect the normal reader. He or she will still be able to get their comics. If not at the local comic shop, then down at the Walmart.

But a lot of us care about the direct-market comics shops where risks are taken, and the art form is allowed to flourish (even if it's only allowed to flourish around the edges). Walmart, and stores like it, will certainly bring more comics to more kids, providing the makers of comics with a larger audience. But do you think a giant chain store is going to mess around with new books like *Bone* or *Sin City* or *Wandering Star*? They won't. For a number of reasons, they won't.

Of course, this is only one possible scenario. Anything can happen. That's why change scares people. And when people get scared, they start looking for scapegoats and band-aid solutions. And the biggest bugaboo of all is that the price of comics is too high when compared to the value of other forms of entertainment, or that kids just can't afford comics any more.

Well, I've got news for you. The Jobless Rate is at a four-year low. Every other industry is experiencing a resurgence. People *have* money to spend. Kids are getting their allowances–and they aren't the one dollar us grownups used to get, either! Wake up. They have the money, they just aren't spending it at our stores!

Is it because of "comparative value"? For $2 you can rent a movie on tape. That's *two hours* of entertainment compared to the 10-20 minutes of entertainment you get from reading a comic book.

I have to say that I can't stand arbitrary comparisons like this. It's so corporate, cover-my-butt nonsensical that it squeaks. When I was interested in doing comic strips in the newspapers, back before I started *Bone*, that industry was in the midst of strangling itself artistically because it thought it was competing with TV. So it started following marketing reports and becoming more and more like TV sitcoms. Comic strips today offer very little of what comic strips did best in their heyday. Do you think comic strips are competing with television shows? Of course not. They are entirely different arts, that require entirely different kinds of participation from their audiences. But people in the comic strip business have allowed themselves to be talked into this. And in their capitulation, they have doomed themselves to be second-class TV entertainers instead of exploring the envelope of the field that they actually practice in. Part of the price you pay for being second class at anything is loss of power, and nowhere is that more evident than in the shrinking size of the American comic strip.



If we are going to make random comparisons, let's try on some that empower us, like ... CDs.

CDs are only 40 minutes of entertainment. And people don't even blink at paying $15! If comics are half as much entertainment, maybe comics should cost $7.50! Or how about greeting cards? People will pay $1.95 or *more* for a single panel of a cartoon! Boy, if we started charging $1.95 a panel ... well, no one would buy it, of course. That's the danger of these comparisons between mediums.

But perhaps it is worth thinking about this: Outside of the world of comic book shops, people will pay much higher prices for things they want. When was the last time you paid a dime, or even $2.50 for a copy of *Time* magazine?

Why are we artificially trying to keep comics cheap? I think it's because we—just like the rest of America—think that comics are just cheap crap for kids, and we have to keep each copy affordable for even the most cash-strapped, allowance-poor fourth grader.

Some comics are for kids. And they'll stay affordable for children. But if you are having trouble keeping your comic book store open, then selling children's comics obviously isn't really working out for you in a business sense, is it?

We have to change our preconceptions.

A CD is *worth* $15. A comic book is *worth* $3. They're *worth* it! I mean, if a Big Mac combo meal is worth three bucks, a piece of literature that frees your imagination—not to mention a treasured and permanent addition to your collection—certainly ought to be.

If you are a store owner and you want to lower the price of comics, then you are taking money out of your own pocket and you are keeping yourself down. Think like a businessman! Diversify. If children can't support your business, get adults into your store.

If you think you're losing money to videos, start renting videos in your shop. Sell music. Let people see what a good deal comics are. ▲

Jeff Smith is the creator, writer and artist of Bone.



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